ARMENIAN MINIATURES

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Publisher's Note

We should like to express our gratitude to the administrations of the Matenadaran and the Museum of Fine Arts of Yerevan and to the members of the staffs of these two fine institutions for the aid they have given us to realize this volume. It is a rare privilege for a foreign publisher to have had access to these ancient manuscripts which are conserved with a jealous care.

If certain of the manuscripts are already known to some specialists, most of them, to our knowledge, have never been reproduced outside Armenia. Their appearance pushes back the limits of our knowledge of an art which precedes oil painting.

We should like to thank M. Khanzadian who authorized the reproduction on our back endpapers of the map preserved in the Vatican Museums from his *Atlas de Géographie Historique de l'Arménie*.

Text translated from the French by Irene J. Underwood

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THE GOSPEL OF 1323
DETAIL OF A CANON TABLE

THIS BEAUTIFUL BOOK OF COLOR REPRODUCTIONS of Armenian miniatures and the text by Mme. Lydia Dournovo will contribute greatly to a better understanding of an art which until now has been familiar only to specialists; and even specialists will find in this book new materials and valuable information. The examples reproduced have been chosen exclusively from among the manuscripts in the Matenadaran, the library at Yerevan, but thanks to the richness of the collection and the careful selection by our author, we can see the different aspects of Armenian illumination, the individual traits of each school, and we can follow the changes that took place in the course of time.

Mme. Dournovo has written several interesting studies of Armenian miniature and monumental painting, and for a number of years she has been training young painters who, under her guidance, have made accurate copies of the frescoes of ancient churches and the illuminations of manuscripts. A painter herself, she writes with competence on the technical methods of medieval artists and on the stylistic characteristics of the works she has studied.

The manuscripts presented in this book illustrate an artistic history of more than a thousand years, the earliest sample dating in the sixth or seventh century and the latest in the seventeenth.

Mme. Dournovo should be particularly commended for including the four miniatures bound in at the end of the *Etchmiadzin Gospel* (pages 33, 35, 37, 39). These were first published in 1891

by Josef Strzygowski, but because of the poor quality of the reproductions they could not be studied properly. The good colorplates enable us now to appreciate the high artistic quality of these paintings and to place them among the principal examples of Early Christian art. Until now they had been considered to be Syrian miniatures brought to Armenia at an early date, but recent discoveries and, especially, a closer study of Armenian frescoes of the sixth and seventh centuries prove, as Mme. Dournovo indicates, that these miniatures were made by Armenians and belong to the same artistic current as the wall paintings. The miniatures have the same severe style and monumental character as the wall paintings, but, since the medium is different, the ornamental details are more fully developed. We should note the richness of the architectural settings and, in particular, the original design of the frame around the Baptism (page 39): a pelican stands on a gold chalice decorated with precious stones, which is placed in turn on an equally ornate paten, a motif repeated several times. The eucharistic implications of this motif are quite evident.

While calling attention to the influences of the arts of neighboring countries, or even of countries that are very distant, Mme. Dournovo has brought to light the original traits of Armenian painting. For it is true that despite a conservative tendency, the continued use of ancient decorative motifs and iconographic themes, Armenian art is a living art which, more than once, witnessed a revival and found new formulas and original modes of expression. The creative periods correspond with the periods of national independence: from the end of the ninth century to the beginning of the eleventh in the Bagratid kingdoms of Ani and Kars, in the Ardzruni kingdom of Van, and in the province of Siunik'; from the twelfth century to the end of the fourteenth in the kingdom of Cilicia; in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Greater Armenia, when the country was ruled by Armenian princes who were the vassals of the Georgian kings. But even during the periods of foreign domination and in remote areas, like the city of Khizan to the southwest of Lake Van, there flourished schools of miniaturists who were not lacking in originality. The examples from the scriptoria of Van-Khizan which are published in the present book show the beginnings of this school and have a popular character with a somewhat crude design. But in the fifteenth century more gifted painters devised compositions in which expressive vigor is allied with a fine decorative sense and more elegant forms. Secular elements appear with increasing frequency in the religious scenes, and these painters have sometimes been so bold as to represent Christ in contemporary costume, wearing wide trousers and leather boots.

It is indubitably in Cilicia, during the thirteenth century, that Armenian painting reached its apogee, as one can see from numerous examples included in this book. The artistic quality of the manuscripts of this period equals that of the finest creations of medieval art in the Near East and in western Europe. It is a sophisticated art, in full control of its means of expression, with remarkably rich ornamental compositions in which elements derived from the most varied sources are harmoniously combined with the traditional Armenian motifs in constantly renewed designs. The color harmonies, at times in subtly graded shades, at other times like brilliant enamels on a gold ground, and the consummate skill with which the intricate ornaments are drawn, confer a particular charm on the decorative pages peopled with imaginary beings created by the fantasy of the artists. The figure compositions reveal the same power of invention. The Armenian painters of Cilicia, less subservient than the Byzantine artists to the rules of iconography, enriched the Gospel cycle with new scenes that show a direct observation of everyday life. Keenly interested in all that sur-

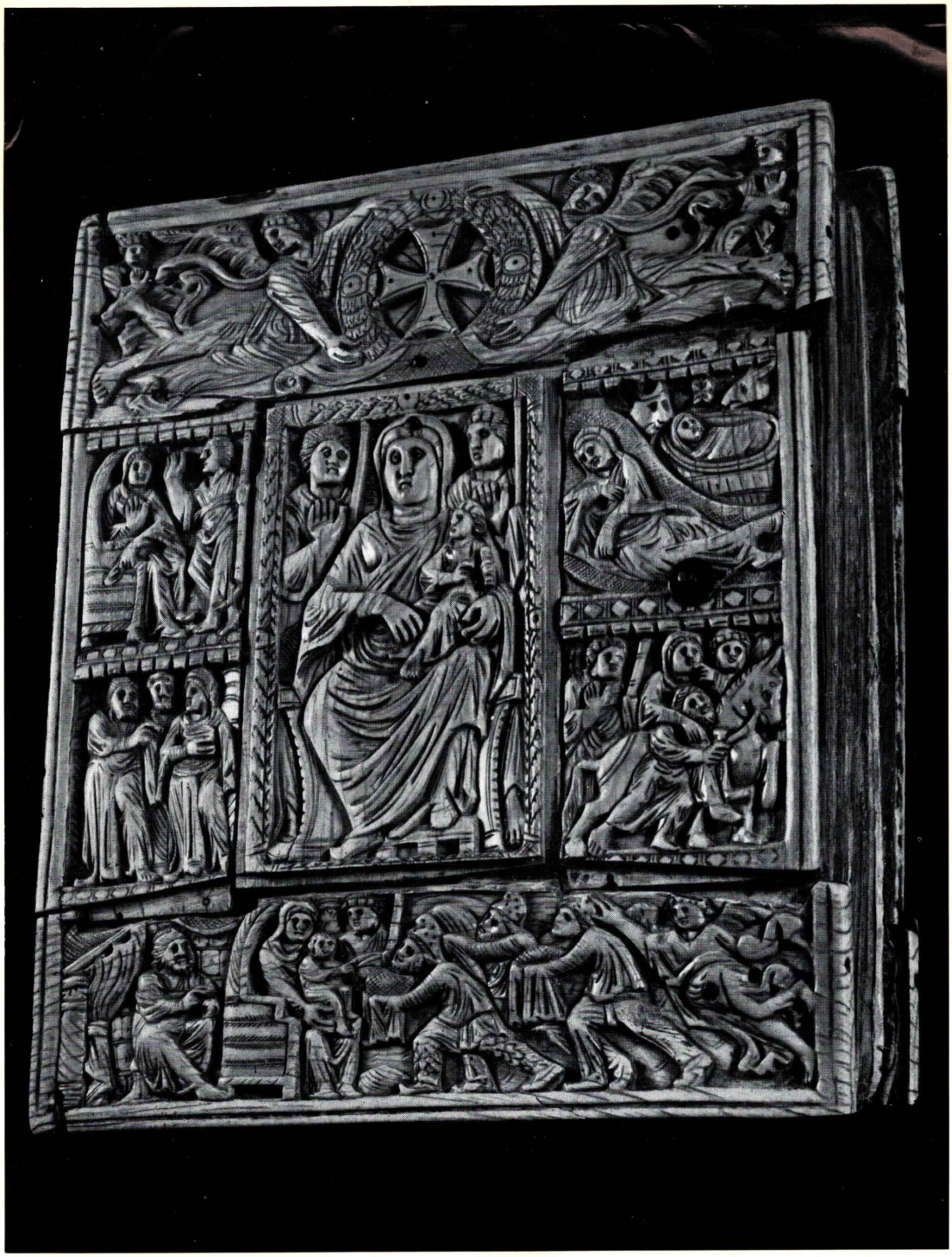
rounded them, they were able to appreciate the art that had developed in the Latin kingdoms of the Levant, or the works of western Europe, which they came to know through their contacts with the Crusaders.

The manuscripts of later date offer examples of artistic activity pursued beyond the boundaries of the mother country. The Armenians hastened to found schools for scribes and painters wherever they settled. We find them at work at New Djulfa, in Persia, where they had been transplanted by Shah Abbas I; or in the Crimea, where they emigrated in large numbers beginning in the fourteenth century. There were also important scriptoria in Syria and Asia Minor, notably at Aleppo, Sebastia, and Tokat; and finally in Constantinople, especially in the seventeenth century. During this last period the painters often had recourse to models of a much earlier date. They copied the Cilician manuscripts, sometimes with such accuracy that one can be deceived at first sight; by the choices they made they revealed their appreciation of the products of the best period of Armenian painting. They were also attracted, like contemporary Greek and Russian artists, by the engravings of Latin Bibles; these they imitated, particularly for illustrating the Old Testament and the Apocalypse.

All those who are interested in medieval painting will feel indebted to Mme. Dournovo for the care with which she has selected, commented upon, and brought to our attention works of art which few persons have had the opportunity to see. They will also appreciate the quality of the reproductions, which give a faithful image of the originals.

Washington, D.C.
May 1961

SIRARPIE DER NERSESSIAN



Front Cover of the Etchmiadzin Gospel. Ivory. Sixth Century

Back Cover of the Etchmiadzin Gospel. Ivory. Sixth Century

THE GOSPEL OF 1397
MARGINAL FIGURE

THE ART OF BOOK ILLUSTRATION has a long history. Since very early times all men have inserted drawings and paintings in their manuscripts to adorn or to clarify the text. Illuminations have sometimes even contributed to the formation of the alphabet. Such was the case in Armenia; the alphabet was created by Mesrop Maschtots in 396 A.D. Later, in the fifth century, so great was the desire of the Armenians to have books written in their language—and no longer in Greek or Syriac—that numerous religious, historical, and scientific books were translated and written. The illumination of these manuscripts was executed partly under the influence of the type of Christian art which had come from Syria, where illustrated manuscripts had existed since the sixth century (*Gospel of Rabula,* 586 A.D.), and partly under the influence of Armenian mural paintings of the seventh century (Lmbat, Arudj). These mural paintings prove the existence of independent artistic traditions in Armenia. The fifth-century capitals of the Basilica of K'asakh, decorated with motifs inspired by the pictorial art of ancient Urartu, also testify to this fact.

The so-called *Lazareff Gospel* (887 A.D.), preserved at the Matenadaran,* is the first dated Armenian manuscript to have come down to us. We shall probably never know the very first Armenian manuscript, but we do possess miniatures older than the *Lazareff Gospel;* these are the last folios bound into the famous *Etchmiadzin Gospel,* which itself is dated 989 A.D. The four miniatures bound into the *Etchmiadzin Gospel* date from the sixth century. It has been questioned whether these early miniatures are wholly Armenian since at the time they were painted Armenia had not had its own political and economic structure for long. But research during the last twenty years in the fields of ceramics, mural painting, and sculpture has demonstrated that the artistic level of the country was very high at this period. The miniatures bound at the end of the *Etchmiadzin Gospel* are too great an achievement not to have been the outgrowth of a tradition. Therefore, one can safely fix the origin of the art of miniature painting in Armenia around the fifth or sixth century.

The Armenian origin of later works is indisputable and their high quality is the best proof of a long artistic tradition.

The art of miniature painting had almost disappeared in Armenia by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Therefore, it can be stated that it flourished for nearly thirteen centuries almost without interruption. Four or five thousand manuscripts issued from the hands of Armenian painters during this period. At present they are preserved at the Institute for the Study of Ancient Books at Yerevan, at the Library of St. James of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem, at the Mekhitarist Library of San Lazzaro in Venice, at the Mekhitarist Library in Vienna, and in private collections in Europe and America.

The majority of Armenian manuscripts extant are Gospel books. Bibles are rarer; rarest of all are lectionaries, hymnals, and collections of homilies. Portraits are found as early as the eleventh century, but always in Bibles or Gospels. Purely secular manuscripts do not appear before the fifteenth century and continue to be very rare thereafter. Aside from portraits, the first known secular miniature represents the Battle of Avaraïr (451 A.D.) in the *Hymnal of 1482.* If the Gospel is the most frequently illustrated text it is because it was the most widely read; historical and scientific works were used only by a minority.

It is interesting to see how the painters of the miniatures succeed in avoiding the peril of monotony despite a reduced number of subjects. Certain miniatures are masterpieces in their originality. Twelve or sixteen events from the Gospel are generally chosen for

* The Matenadaran, or Institute for the Study of Ancient Books, in Yerevan, is the center in Armenia where all ancient manuscripts are kept.

illustration; also, the artists are inspired by other less-important events, notably the Parables and the Miracles, which are represented schematically in the margins in a reduced format. The painters are especially fond of the inexhaustible realm of decorative motifs. These are usually simple in structure, inspired either by geometric forms, or, more often, by plant or animal forms in more or less realistic representations. The sources of inspiration for the motifs are often pagan—cult of the sun, of water, of the Tree of Life. It is to be noted that formal stylization does not really occur except in plant forms; living beings, although stylized, are always recognizable. The only exception is that of the symbolic beasts of the Four Evangelists on the title pages.

Numerous scenes are pagan in inspiration. They refer to the theater, the circus, the hunt. Many details enable us to discover the period in which the miniatures were executed: portraits of donors, or self-portraits, furniture, vases, musical instruments, etc.

The iconographic details of the narrative miniatures are of greatly diverse origins, although the thematic repertory owes its variety solely to Armenian artists. These foreign origins can be traced to Syria, obviously; also to Palestine, Rome, and Egypt. This diver-

THE GOSPEL OF 1397. MARGINAL FIGURE

sity makes for some confusion between pagan and Christian concepts. Yet, in spite of the variety of its origins, Armenian iconography is distinct and readily recognizable. It develops in an independent and original manner.

The iconography of decorative motifs evolves in a distinct way, although the motifs are common to all Christian countries of the Mediterranean and the Near East until the eleventh century. Armenian motifs have a strong individuality which will not disappear under the impact of foreign styles, but which, on the contrary, will thrive on successive contributions. Therefore, not even an influence from Byzantium could profoundly change the art of the Armenian miniatures. Only a few Byzantine details were retained by the Armenian artists; some were assimilated and transmitted to their successors while others were used only once. Certain details reappear some centuries later, enjoying what is only an ephemeral revival. Those details which were really assimilated, on the other hand, remain very persistent. In spite of superficial transformations, the Byzantine motifs of the acanthus, the disk, the rainbow, the small paten, and the wreath of flowers always recur. This is why certain motifs used in the River Scene in the *Gospel of Queen Mlk'é* (902 A.D.) and details of the *Gospel of Mugni* (middle of the eleventh century) are clearly related to the style of Alexandria.

However, the combined influences of ancient paganism and Hellenism explain but one aspect of Armenian art, an art more directly inspired by Christian ideology. This must be remembered in order to understand the evolution of Armenian art. A comparison of various miniatures executed throughout the centuries will allow us to single out certain constant elements which are the very essence of this art: simple composition of narrative miniatures, basic patterns of decorative motifs, a varied but limited range of colors, and, lastly, a very decorative quality of all these works.

A more searching analysis permits one to distinguish beyond these common characteristics two opposed trends which reflect two milieus. These are particularly evident in works painted at the same period: for example, the *Gospel of 986* and that of Etchmiadzin (989 A.D.); the *Gospel of 1038* and the *Gospel of Mugni* (middle of the eleventh century); the *Gospel of 1224* and that of T'argmantchats (1232); lastly, the *Gospel of 1332,* executed in the region of Lake Van, and that of the painter T'oros Taronetsi of Gladsor (1328).

The characteristics of the first tendency are: few figures; an absence of background, architecture, landscape, and everyday objects; a limited range of colors, and no gold; expressive gestures and faces; simple ornamental motifs; and inexpensive materials. The monks who were the creators of these miniatures did not have a great artistic culture, but the spontaneity of their painting pleased the simple folk among whom they lived and worked.

The second tendency is in direct contrast to the first. The garments, ornaments, details, and figures are painted with care; the gestures are elegant; the setting, architectural or landscape, is elaborate; the decorative motifs (birds or animals) are well developed; the paint is heavy and gold is frequently employed. This technique is peculiar to the painters who received an academic training in a large monastery whose library possessed Syrian, Greek, and Latin works beside Armenian manuscripts. Those who commissioned these manuscripts were civil or religious personages able not only to pay for costly materials and for necessarily slow work but also able to contribute to the development of new painters.

Generally speaking, these two tendencies developed in parallel lines. Nevertheless, one case may be cited, the *Gospel of Hagbat* (1211), in which they fused temporarily. After the thirteenth century borrowing by one tendency from the other becomes more frequent, yet each still preserves its own essential characteristics.

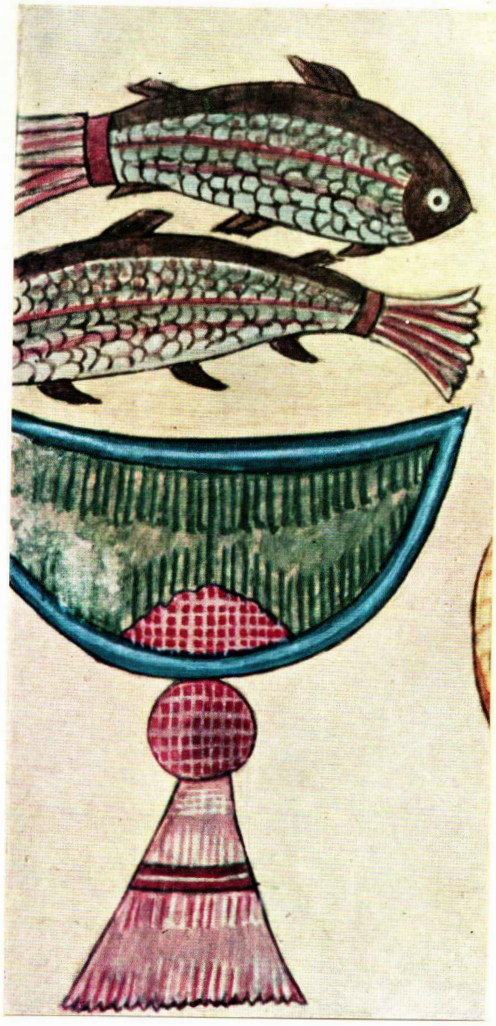
Few manuscripts earlier than the eleventh century have come down to us. Hence, it is not possible to classify them by schools during the early period and classification starts with works of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The great monasteries played an important role in the formation of the various

THE BIBLE OF 1338
EXECUTED IN CILICIA BY SARKIS PIDZAK

Bishop Stephanos had commissioned Sarkis Pidzak, whom he called "the illustrious painter," to finish the manuscript presented to the Bishop in 1320 by King Oshin. Many works by Pidzak, both signed and unsigned, are known. In his day he was very well known and appreciated by a public fond of skillful but superficial academic works.

schools. The procedures which were evolved in the monasteries quickly spread throughout the whole region. The names of the schools are those of the regions where they arose (School of Turuberan, of Katchen, etc.). One of the most important was the School of Lake Van which flourished in the fourteenth century. It divided into several branches of which that of Aght'amar continued up to the seventeenth century.

There are some manuscripts which apparently are not related to any tradition. Two explanations of this phenomenon are possible: the disappearance of other manuscripts of the same school, or the strong individuality of the painter.



In what material circumstances were these manuscripts illustrated? Certain ones contain information relating to the time and place in which they were written, the donor's name, historical details, or prayers about a specific event. Sometimes certain inscriptions are personal in tone; they are always complaints by the artists about the poor quality of the materials, the poor light, the cold, and sometimes about the hardships of exile. There is never an optimistic note, for then the artist would have had no excuse for the imperfections of his work.

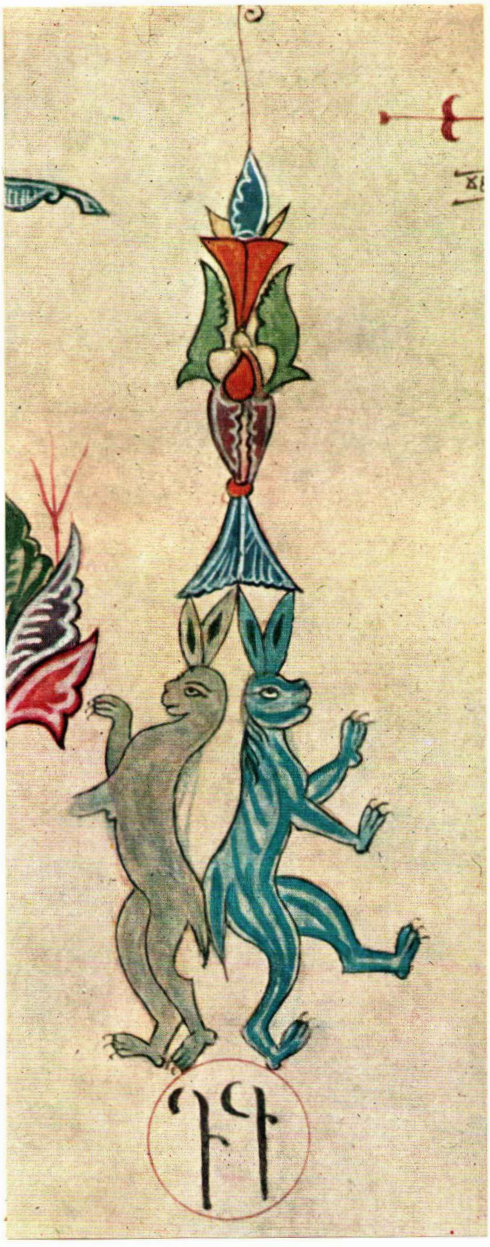
The general composition of the manuscripts scarcely varies. A complete manuscript consists of eight to ten canon tables—decorative motifs in the form of an arch enclosing columns of numbers which are the cross references for the texts of the Four Gospels. The canon tables are followed by one to sixteen full-page narrative miniatures, brought together at the beginning of

THE GOSPEL OF 1304. MARGINAL MINIATURE

the manuscript or facing the text they illustrate. Sometimes miniatures with complementary subjects in the margins follow the canon tables. The portraits of the Evangelists appear grouped together, or paired off, or each facing his own Gospel. In the latter case a title page is provided for the Gospel of the particular Evangelist. Finally, decorated initials and marginal ornaments mark the beginnings of chapters and paragraphs.

At first, manuscripts were painted exclusively on parchment, a rare material. Even in a sumptuous manuscript like the *Etchmiadzin Gospel* both sides of the sheet were used. The first extant manuscript in which paint was applied on one side only is the *Gospel of Mugni* (middle of the eleventh century). The parchment was prepared from the skin of domestic animals. It was cleaned, stretched, and treated. The more white and transparent the parchment, the more expensive it was. Most of the pages are eaten by larvae; some of these pages were patched, on others the artist simply painted around the hole.

Paper was occasionally used for texts from the eleventh century onward. However, the first manuscripts to be illuminated on paper date from the second half of the thirteenth century. The specially treated paper resembles parchment perfectly.



THE GOSPEL OF 1304. MARGINAL MINIATURE

The sheets of parchment or of paper were folded in the middle and joined together three by three, giving a gathering of twelve pages. After being decorated the sheets were

stitched. The cloth which forms the spine of the manuscript was frequently a fragment of old tapestry. Sometimes pages of lost manuscripts were bound with the new leaves. Thanks to this happy circumstance works of frequently outstanding quality have been partially preserved in later books.

What was the usual procedure in painting a miniature? The straight lines and the arcs were drawn with ruler and compass, as is proved by the slight marks left by the instruments, which can still be seen. Then the painter would sketch in the principal elements of the composition in red or ocher, and would apply glue to the parts that were to be covered with gold. (Before the twelfth century, with few exceptions, gold leaf and not gold paint was applied to the parchment.) Finally, the artist would cover the outlined surfaces with gouache, in heavy or light coats, depending on the practice of his school. The paints were made from either plants, earth, or metal oxides, or imported, like lapis lazuli. The technique was developed to a high degree by the Cilicians.

The art of miniature painting was affected by all the political upheavals in Armenia: invasion by Persia, by Rome, by Byzantium; invasion by the Turks, the Mongols, or wars in which Armenia was an ally of one or the other. Until the seventh century, life was peaceful enough, despite the Persian yoke, as is attested by the Gospel books and mural paintings (at K'asakh, Tekor, Lmbat, Arudj, T'alin). Later, under a harsher rule by the Arabs, artistic creation practically disappeared. No work has been found prior to the middle of the ninth century, the end of the Caliphate. During the reign of the Bagratids, lasting until the middle of the eleventh century, almost complete independence is restored to Armenia and intense artistic activity is renewed. The production of manuscripts increases. The dimensions of the pages change. Larger sheets are used, on one side only. An iconography evolves. Title pages conform to a single model. The first line is inscribed in a vignette and the initial letter is accompanied by the symbol of the Evangelist (an angel for Matthew, a lion for Mark, an ox for Luke, an eagle for John). The marginal illustrations occasionally take on greater importance, as in the *Gospel of Kars* (second half of the eleventh century). The arch of the canon tables is sometimes surmounted by a rectangular ornament, as in the *Gospel of Mugni*.

Under the Bagratids the great political, economic, and cultural center was Ani. Other artistic centers were the Monasteries of Haghbat and of Sanahin (from which came the *Etchmiadzin Gospel* and its many and inferior imitations) and, lastly, the region where numerous heresies sprang up, Turuberan, famous for works of a more popular inspiration.

But this development during the reign of the Bagratids was interrupted by the invasion of the Turks, who progressively took possession of all Armenia between 1065 and 1080. It was not until between 1203 and 1210 that the Armenians succeeded in chasing them out. Armenia was annexed by Georgia. The Zak'arians mounted the throne and encouraged a cultural revival in Ani and Cilicia.

This rebirth in the artistic domain was accompanied by a more liberal attitude toward religious concepts. The wealthy merchants were no longer content with miniatures of religious inspiration; they demanded other subjects. Thus it is that we find portraits of contemporary men in the manuscripts (*Haghbat Gospel*).

THE GOSPEL OF 1397. MARGINAL FIGURE

In 1220 the Mongols invaded Transcaucasia and, in 1243, Armenia. In spite of economic collapse and decimation of the country, artistic life did not disappear. Toward the middle of the fourteenth century new painters appeared in the region of Lake Van, in the Monasteries of Gladsor, Vorotnovank', Tat'ev, etc.

The miniatures of the School of Lake Van are stripped of all unnecessary ornament; they have no background; the color is transparent; the folds of the garments are boldly stylized. Only the marginal illustrations of Cilician inspiration are fully developed.

Toward the end of the eleventh century Armenians fleeing before the Turkish invaders settled in southwest Asia Minor, in Cilicia. This country, at the crossroad between East and West, saw Leo II, Het'um I, and Leo III succeed each other in the course of a century as rulers who made Cilicia a great commercial and cultural center. The first Cilician work is the *Gospel of Tübingen* (1113). Subsequent works show a development of technical mastery by Cilician artists. These artists draw upon Armenian skills and create works which appeal to bibliophiles as much as they serve the cult. The pages of the manuscripts, frequently decorated with gold in relief, fall more within the domain of jewelry than

painting. The canon tables are adorned with hunting and circus scenes and with ornaments inspired by plants and animals. The same phenomenon can be observed in the marginal sketches and the frames of the miniatures.

The Cilician artists interest themselves especially in the human figure and execute their faces with care. T'oros Roslin can be considered as a precursor of the Renaissance in the importance he accords man in his painting.

In its richness and majesty Cilician art is one of aristocratic inspiration. The people who commissioned the works were, for the most part, of royal birth or members of the nobility.

In Armenia proper nomad invasions caused cessation of almost all artistic activity during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Works of this time are poor in both composition (canon tables and marginal illustrations) and color.

It was not until the seventeenth century that a few works of some interest are seen. These are the result of an economic revival. They are of the School of Erzurum, which sprang from the Schools of Tat'ev and Aght'amar and was influenced by the work of Jacob Tjughaetsi.

A few isolated manuscripts can still be found at the beginning of the eighteenth century. They are but reminders of an art impossible to resurrect, yet one which has gained for Armenia admittance into the realm of great art.

THE LECTIONARY OF 1288. MARGINAL FIGURE

On the sole illustrated folio of this manuscript there is, on the recto, a great cross with flowering ends, the symbol of life; on the verso, which we see here, is the apocryphal theme of the Annunciation to the Virgin at the Well. Both the Virgin and the Archangel Gabriel are identified by inscriptions written above the frame.

The garments of the figures, especially those of Gabriel, give a strange impression. The painter evidently was not very conversant with the classical disposition of drapery adopted by almost all miniaturists of the time, for he represents Gabriel dressed in a secular garment and a traveler's cloak with scalloped edges, as was then the fashion. Gabriel's appearance is also unusual in his being represented without wings. The Virgin holds out her pitcher to a fountain which is in the shape of a basin fixed to a wall and terminating in an arch. The interlace pattern which encloses the miniature is an extremely rare ornamental motif, found only in very early works.

The faces and gestures, although rather poorly drawn, nevertheless achieve expressiveness by the spontaneity with which they are rendered; they show a real interest of the participants in the encounter. The stylized treatment of the subject and the range of colors are of national inspiration.

The Annunciation at the Well

5 1/8 × 11 1/8″

MANUSCRIPT OF THE NINTH-TENTH CENTURY

(Matenadaran 7739)

The famous *Etchmiadzin Gospel* (989 A.D.) constitutes a unique work of its kind because of the outstanding artistic qualities of its miniatures, its iconography, its extraordinary state of preservation, and its remarkable cover of carved ivory (see pages 9 and 10). The pages of the manuscript are striking in their purity and freshness as well as in a certain luminosity of the colors, which are chosen with perfect taste and are heightened with touches of gold. Also remarkable are the harmonious compositions of the canon tables and the narrative miniatures, the unstudied grace of the ornamental and floral motifs, and the realism with which the birds are depicted. It is difficult to believe that these paintings, so bright and clear, will soon be one thousand years old.

In painting the columns which support the canon tables (the arches of which vary in number) the painter has imitated marbles of various colors and designs. Above these arches and in the spandrels he places vases, baskets of fruit, bird cages, branches with pomegranates and roses, ducks, doves, partridges and other birds, all painted with exceptional delicacy and realism.

Canon Table with Birds and Plants

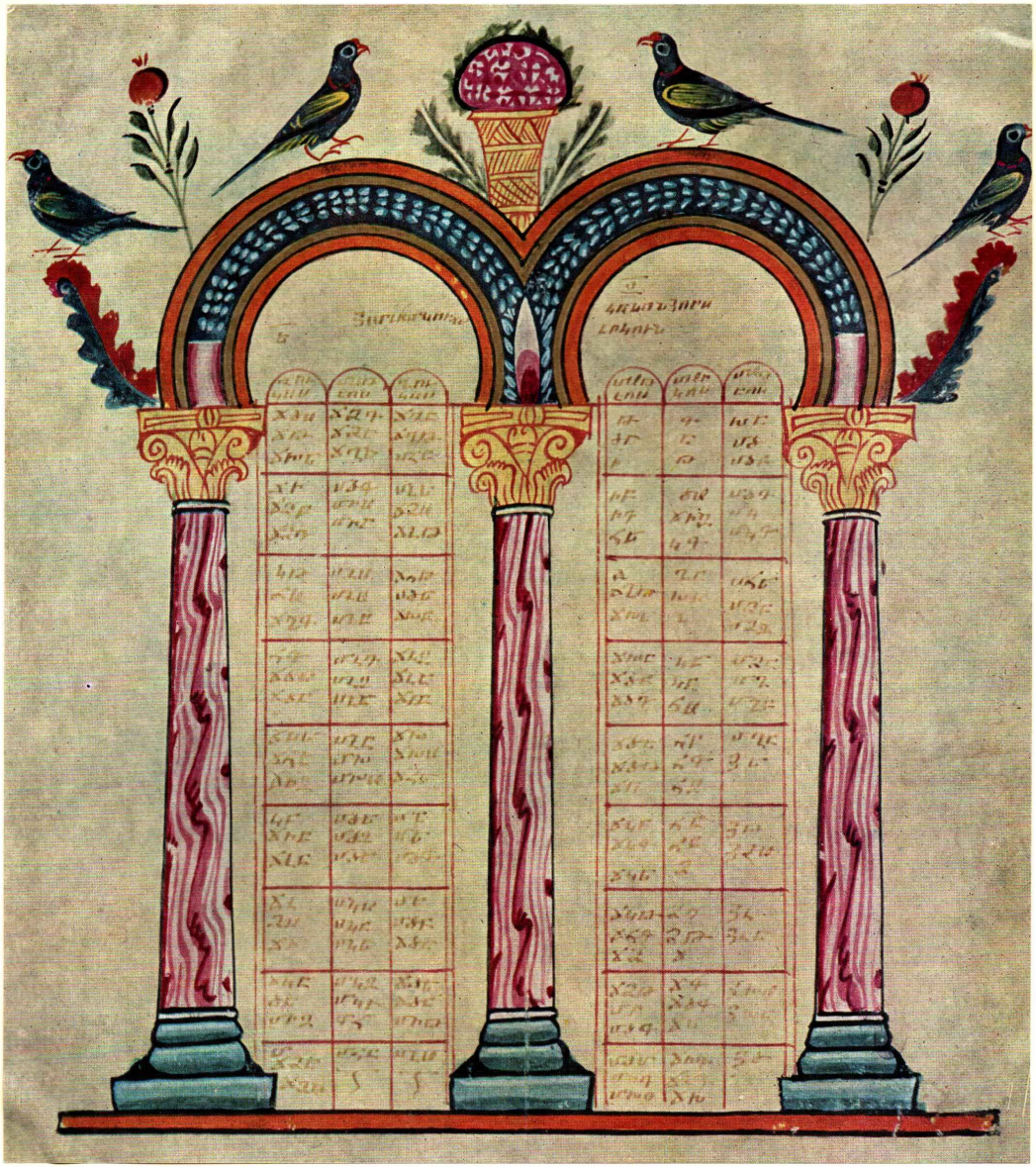
13 1/8 × 10 1/4″

THE ETCHMIADZIN GOSPEL

Executed in the Monastery of Noravank', Siunik'

989 A.D.

(Matenadaran 2374)



All the miniatures are without background or ground zone; they seem to be outside real space, although occasionally one or two elements are introduced to indicate a physical setting. Representations of figures are often surrounded by an area of unpainted parchment. The setting for the Sacrifice of Abraham, for example, is succinctly represented by a stepped pyre to the right and, to the left, a tree to which a ram is tied. In contrast to the elegant and bright setting, Abraham and Isaac appear rather rigid, the stiff folds of their garments making them seem even more static. Their features are drawn in a clear and forceful manner. (Abraham's face is lost. An explanation of this loss has been that an overly devout member of the faithful cut out Abraham's face so that it should not come in contact with that of the Virgin on the opposite page when the book was closed.)

The Sacrifice of Abraham

13 1/4 × 10 5/8″

THE ETCHMIADZIN GOSPEL

Executed in the Monastery of Noravank', Siunik'

989 A.D.

(Matenadaran 2374)

Despite their rigidity, the figures in the *Etchmiadzin Gospel* are not in disharmony with the rest of the miniatures and in no way destroy the impression of beauty and elegance which is created.

Only a wealthy patron could afford such an artist, one who used materials of first quality on semi-transparent parchment which remains perfectly preserved.

The Virgin and Child

13 3/8 × 10 5/8″

THE ETCHMIADZIN GOSPEL

Executed in the Monastery of Noravank', Siunik'

989 A.D.

(Matenadaran 2374)

Tempietto with Birds and Cypresses

13 3/8 × 10 5/8″

THE ETCHMIADZIN GOSPEL

Executed in the Monastery of Noravank', Siunik'

989 A.D.

(Matenadaran 2374)

In this miniature two cypresses covered with climbing plants grow on either side of a columned *tempietto*. This cypress motif, Iranian in origin, is found in earlier Armenian works.

The four miniatures reproduced on the opposite page and the following pages are found at the end of the Etchmiadzin manuscript of 989 A.D. They were painted long before the other illuminations with which they are bound. The tonality of these miniatures and their thick pigment recall the encaustic icons of the fifth and sixth centuries.

The Annunciation

11 × 7 7/8″

THE ETCHMIADZIN GOSPEL

Executed in the Monastery of Noravank', Siunik'

989 A.D.

(Matenadaran 2374)

The Annunciation to Zacharias

11 × 7 7/8″

THE ETCHMIADZIN GOSPEL

Executed in the Monastery of Noravank', Siunik'

989 A.D.

(Matenadaran 2374)

On the other hand, their expressive style brings to mind the mural paintings at Lmbat near Leninakan, a small church of the first half of the seventh century which is still well preserved. These works have a common characteristic of faces with large, staring eyes. One can also relate these

The Adoration of the Magi

11 × 7 7/8″

THE ETCHMIADZIN GOSPEL

Executed in the Monastery of Noravank', Siunik'

989 A.D.

(Matenadaran 2374)

miniatures to a mural painting of the seventh century in Arudj in which there is a similar play of contrasts between black and green, and black and blue. Another work of the same period shows a striking resemblance to these four miniatures, although it was influenced by the art of Alex-

andria. This is the *Gospel of 902* (Ms. 1144 of the Mekhitarist Library of San Lazzaro, Venice), commissioned by Queen Mlk'é of Vaspurakan. Both these works, the *Etchmiadzin Gospel* and the *Gospel of 902,* are stamped with nobility and are very characteristic of a feudal regime.

The Baptism of Christ

11 × 7 7/8″

THE ETCHMIADZIN GOSPEL

Executed in the Monastery of Noravank', Siunik'

989 A.D.

(Matenadaran 2374)

The Nativity and *The Adoration of the Magi*

9 1/8 × 12 1/4″

THE GOSPEL OF 1038

Executed in Armenia

(Matenadaran 6201)

The miniatures of the *Gospel of 1038* possess exceptional artistic qualities. They are notable for achieving maximum effects by minimum means. The name of the artist, who must have worked somewhere in the province of Turuberan, is unknown.

The formal character of the compositions and figures here does not disguise a progressive, rhythmical dynamism. The figures are grouped around a static center, usually Christ, toward which all movement converges. This is particularly evident in the inclined heads and bodies in the Last Supper; also, in the movements of the hands of the active figures and in the silhouettes of the sleeping soldiers in the scene of the Holy Women at the Sepulcher. The artist, carried away by the rhythm of the drapery folds, skillfully achieves a very accentuated stylization. In the Holy Women at the Sepulcher he disposes the folds either fanwise or in volutes or in parallel waves.

The animated faces with large, staring eyes and well-marked features are strongly national in type.

The Holy Women at the Sepulcher

10 5/8 × 14 1/2″

THE GOSPEL OF 1038

Executed in Armenia

(Matenadaran 6201)

The background and ground zone of the narrative miniatures are unpainted parchment. Landscape and architectural settings are practically non-existent. The same practice is seen in the *Etchmiadzin Gospel,* but in a much less striking form.

In the *Gospel of 1038* an almost total absence of setting is very evident. It harmonizes perfectly with the ensemble of the work, its graphic expression, and the artist's desire to depict the solemnity of the subject and the emotions of its participants. He does this without destroying an elliptical manner of treating the subject (few figures, restrained action) by an overwhelming *mise en scène.* Finally to be noted is the range of colors—soft, diluted, of almost watercolor quality, with no gold accents.

The thieves of the Crucifixion have particularly expressive faces. The Good Thief looks at the already dead Christ with faith and hope, while denial and stubbornness can be read on the averted face of the Bad Thief.

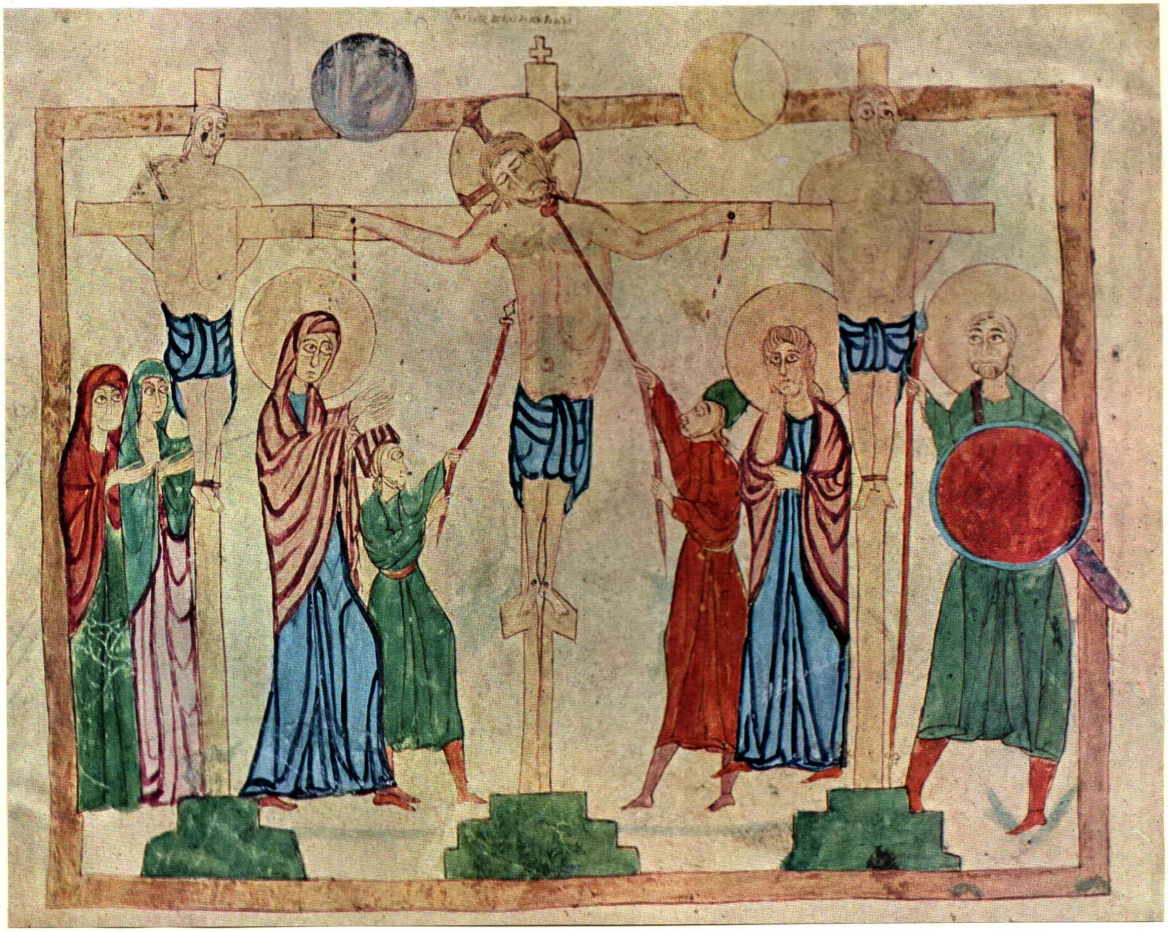
The Crucifixion

10 5/8 × 12 1/2"

THE GOSPEL OF 1038

Executed in Armenia

(Matenadaran 6201)



By the use of light in the Last Supper the artist has isolated Christ and the youthful St. John from their companions. The emotions of the figures are expressed by a very subtle system of curves and rhythms—convincing proof of the artistic ability of the painter.

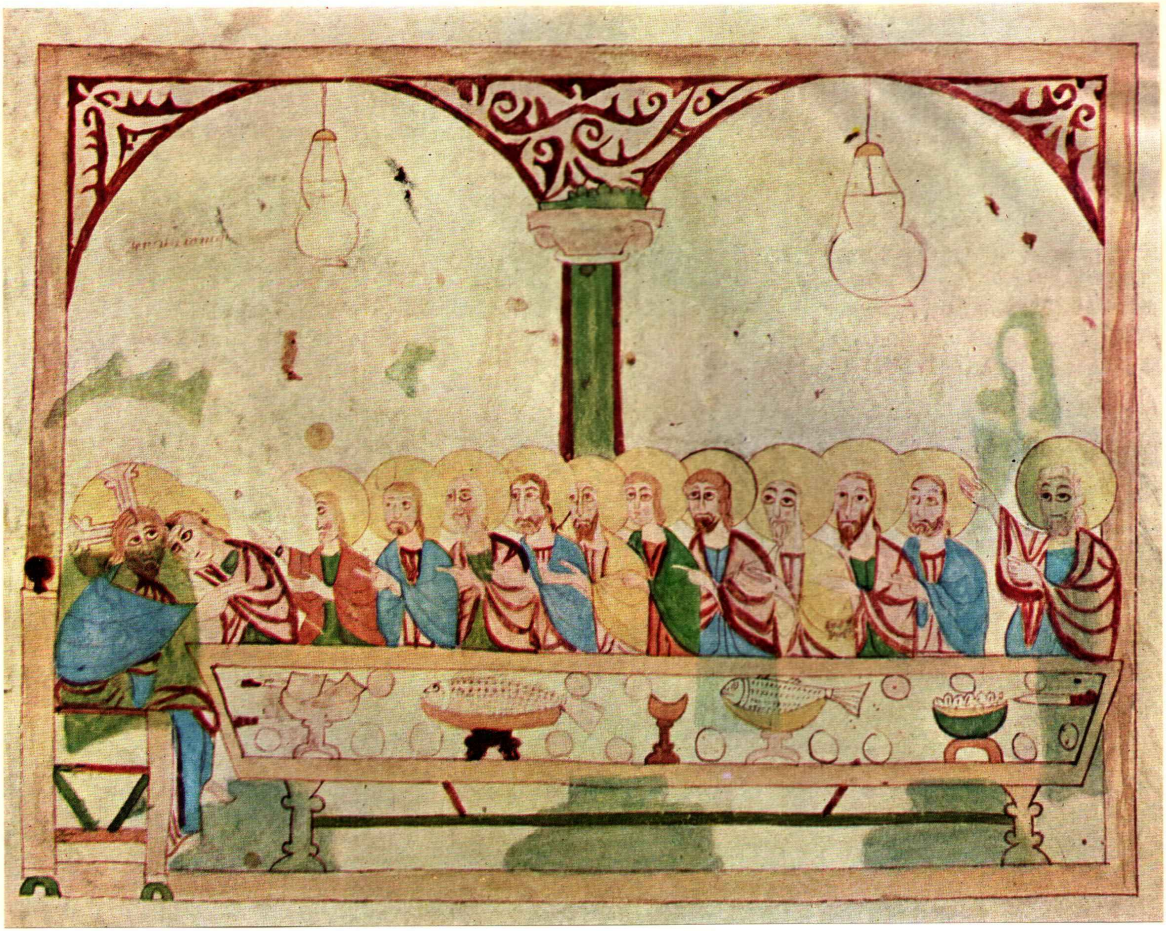
The miniatures are painted on rough, dark parchment pierced by many holes, the marks of time's wear. Almost all the colors are made of vegetable compounds and are, consequently, less expensive. There is no gold.

The originality of expression and certain iconographic peculiarities (for example, the Holy Women at the Sepulcher is painted in this manuscript according to SS. John and Luke, not according to SS. Matthew and Mark as was usually done) make this series of miniatures the first of a school which will perpetuate its traditions for centuries. The school flourished particularly in the region of Turuberan and Lake Van.

During certain periods these traditions have been less pronounced, often combining with other currents of influence; at other times they have expressed themselves brilliantly. In either case, they are one of the cornerstones of an appreciable number of secondary schools. There exist works evidently of the same current but executed far from Turuberan. The reasons for this phenomenon are not known, but the mutual resemblance between the works is unmistakable.

The characteristics of the *Gospel of 1038* show the artistic tastes and the conceptions of the social milieu—a popular one—in which it was created. To the individuals who made up this milieu the world of the miniatures represented an ideal of the blessedness to be obtained and a stage on the road to eternal life. These people had within themselves the urge, whether conscious or unconscious, to battle against evil. This battle was waged as much by the ascetism of the hermit, who chastised the devil in his own flesh, as by the unexpected outbreaks of crowds directing desperate riots against the evil forces of an oppressor.

The Last Supper
9 3/4 × 12 1/2"
THE GOSPEL OF 1038
Executed in Armenia
(Matenadaran 6201)



The creator of the miniatures in the *Gospel of Mugni* is not known. (The name of the Gospel is taken from the monastery in Tiflis where it was last preserved.) The time and place of execution of the Gospel are also unknown. Nevertheless, one can suggest a date for the manuscript by comparison with some miniatures in the *Gospel of 1053* (Matenadaran 3593) whose style is extraordinarily close to that of the *Gospel of Mugni*. Both manuscripts may well have been executed at the same time and in the same workshop in northwestern Armenia.

The figures in both miniatures are tall, commanding, majestic in bearing, and rigid. The folds of their garments are disposed like those of classical statues. Their faces are beautiful but are not Armenian in type. The action unfolds before an architectural or landscape background suggesting many planes of space. The settings cover almost the entire area of the miniatures and leave little space for the blue sky.

The creator of the *Gospel of Mugni,* an experienced artist, does not focus on the most dramatic moment of an event, but is inclined to stress its more intimate details. For example, in the scene in which Mary and Elizabeth embrace, he flanks the two women by a maidservant—who welcomingly lifts the curtain of the doorway—and by two neighbors, who observe the scene with curiosity.

In general, all the decorative parts of the manuscript are remarkable. In its canon tables, the architectural equilibrium has been disturbed by the emphasis on superstructure, to the disadvantage of the comparatively slender columns. (The same is seen in the *Gospel of 1053* and in the *Gospel of Kars* which dates from before 1063 [preserved in the Library of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem, Ms. 2556].) The arch of the canon table is inscribed in a rectangular frame filled with profuse ornamentation. The arch is almost lost in this superstructure. Sometime the artist must support the arch by doubling its columns. Often curtains hang between the columns of the canon tables. The leaflike ornaments flanking the columns of numbers relate this manuscript to the *Etchmiadzin Gospel* and to some of its variants executed during the same period. The perfection of the artistic means and the similarities between the *Gospel of Mugni* and the *Gospel of 1053*—and numerous other manuscripts of varied character, too—lead us to suppose that these works all originated in a large workshop of an academic school possessing models of great artistic merit. The school seems to have had highly qualified painters.

Canon Table with Animals

16 1/2 × 12 1/2"

THE GOSPEL OF MUGNI

Executed in Armenia

Middle of the Eleventh Century

(Matenadaran 7736)

The innovation introduced into Armenian art of the eleventh century by the *Gospel of Mugni* is the use of a title page for the Gospels of each of the Four Evangelists. Thus, a representation of each faces his corresponding text. The title page is decorated with a more or less complicated vignette and a big, decorated initial. Plantlike elements are sometime attached to the initial and, later, are developed into more complex marginal motifs.

The garments and faces are modeled. A use of heavy paints recalls the procedure for fresco painting. The *Gospel of Mugni* is related to fresco painting in another way: by its generally soft tonality and blue background, representing the sky.

The Presentation in the Temple

14 3/8 × 9 1/4″

THE GOSPEL OF MUGNI

Executed in Armenia

Middle of the Eleventh Century

(Matenadaran 7736)

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The Annunciation and *The Visitation*

13 3/4 × 9 3/4″

THE GOSPEL OF MUGNI

Executed in Armenia

Middle of the Eleventh Century

(Matenadaran 7736)

Without doubt the *Gospel of Mugni* was commissioned by an important monastery or an influential person. The artist belonged to a school which paid particular attention to the pictorial composition of each page.

The variety of decorative details in the manuscript is due either to the direct influence of foreign works on the painter—and on the sponsor—or to the reflection of those works which served as models. The sponsor wanted to emphasize the opulence and luxury of his life and entourage in order to make a very clear distinction between himself and the common people. This is what gives to the *Gospel of Mugni* its air of pomp—and a certain ponderousness.

The Nativity

14 3/8 × 9 3/4″

THE GOSPEL OF MUGNI

Executed in Armenia

Middle of the Eleventh Century

(Matenadaran 7736)

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The *Gospel of Mugni* and the *Gospel of 1038* both date from the end of the first half of the eleventh century, although such a dating is not assured for the *Gospel of Mugni*. Even though these two works may be contemporary, and from neighboring regions, their total character is very different in that they are the fruits of opposite social spheres.

The Ascension

14 3/8 × 9 3/4″

THE GOSPEL OF MUGNI

Executed in Armenia

Middle of the Eleventh Century

(Matenadaran 7736)

Although related in style to the school of the manuscript of 1038, the miniatures of the manuscript shown here possess distinctive characteristics. These permit one to connect it, and other manuscripts, to a special branch of the School of Mush (Turuberan) of the eleventh century.

These two schools are related to each other by monumentality, laconism, clear-cut decorative stylizations, and watercolor technique. On analysis, however, each of them reveals characteristics which clearly distinguish one from the other.

The Betrayal of Christ

7 1/2 × 12 3/4″

THE GOSPEL OF THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

Executed in Armenia

(Matenadaran 974)

Most of the pages are filled by miniatures in which two scenes are painted within a single frame. The action is always explained by a near object or by an element of the architectural or landscape setting. Although the proportions of the figures are exact, the expression of the faces and the rendering of gestures is monotonous. A strong black line emphasizes facial features and the outline and folds of the garments. A thick violet paint (one of the variants of Armenian purple, the *vordan-karmir*) harmonizes unexpectedly with a dark brick red and light or dark tones.

This group of works will contribute effectively to the formation of the great School of Van in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The Transfiguration and *The Raising of Lazarus*

7 1/2 × 12 9/8″

THE GOSPEL OF THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

Executed in Armenia

(Matenadaran 974)

Sebastia and all Lesser Armenia were repeatedly subject to a Byzantine yoke. Under this domination, which lasted for long periods, Orthodox religion and Byzantine culture were introduced. Byzantine influence made itself felt in various degrees in certain Armenian works, as is shown by the *Gospel of 1066*. This manuscript differs conspicuously from the other works of the eleventh century which we have studied, in format of the volume, choice of illustrations (it has neither narrative miniatures nor canon tables, only the title pages of the Gospels and the portraits of the Evangelists), and its general style.

Title Page, the Gospel According to St. Luke

9 1/8 × 5 7/8″

THE GOSPEL OF 1066

Executed in Sebastia

(Matenadaran 311)

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ՍՒՐԱՑՍՀԱՍՄԱՀԵԼՈՑՒ

The devices used for monumental compositions, the free painting characteristic of Greater Armenia in the eleventh century, disappear under a profusion of gold and of minutely drawn details which make these miniatures worthy of interest.

Judging from documents extant, it would seem that manuscripts of the type of 1066 never had imitators worthy of note in Greater Armenia. In Cilicia, on the contrary, these manuscripts had some influence on the iconography and even on the style of some miniatures.

The Evangelist Matthew

9 1/8 × 5 7/8″

THE GOSPEL OF 1066

Executed in Sebastia

(Matenadaran 311)

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This isolated work, the *Gospel of the First Half of the Twelfth Century,* is of great importance. It constitutes one of the rare links between the art of miniature painting in the eleventh century and that in the thirteenth in Greater Armenia as well as in Cilicia.

Besides the originality and variety of the arrangement of the upper parts of the canon tables there are ornamental motifs of red spirals. Trees and plants are placed on either side of these canon tables. Some are realistically painted, such as the pomegranates, the bindweeds, the mallows, the fig trees; others are more difficult to identify. All have in common their decorative qualities and charm of novelty. In the upper part of the canon tables particularly lifelike birds can be seen.

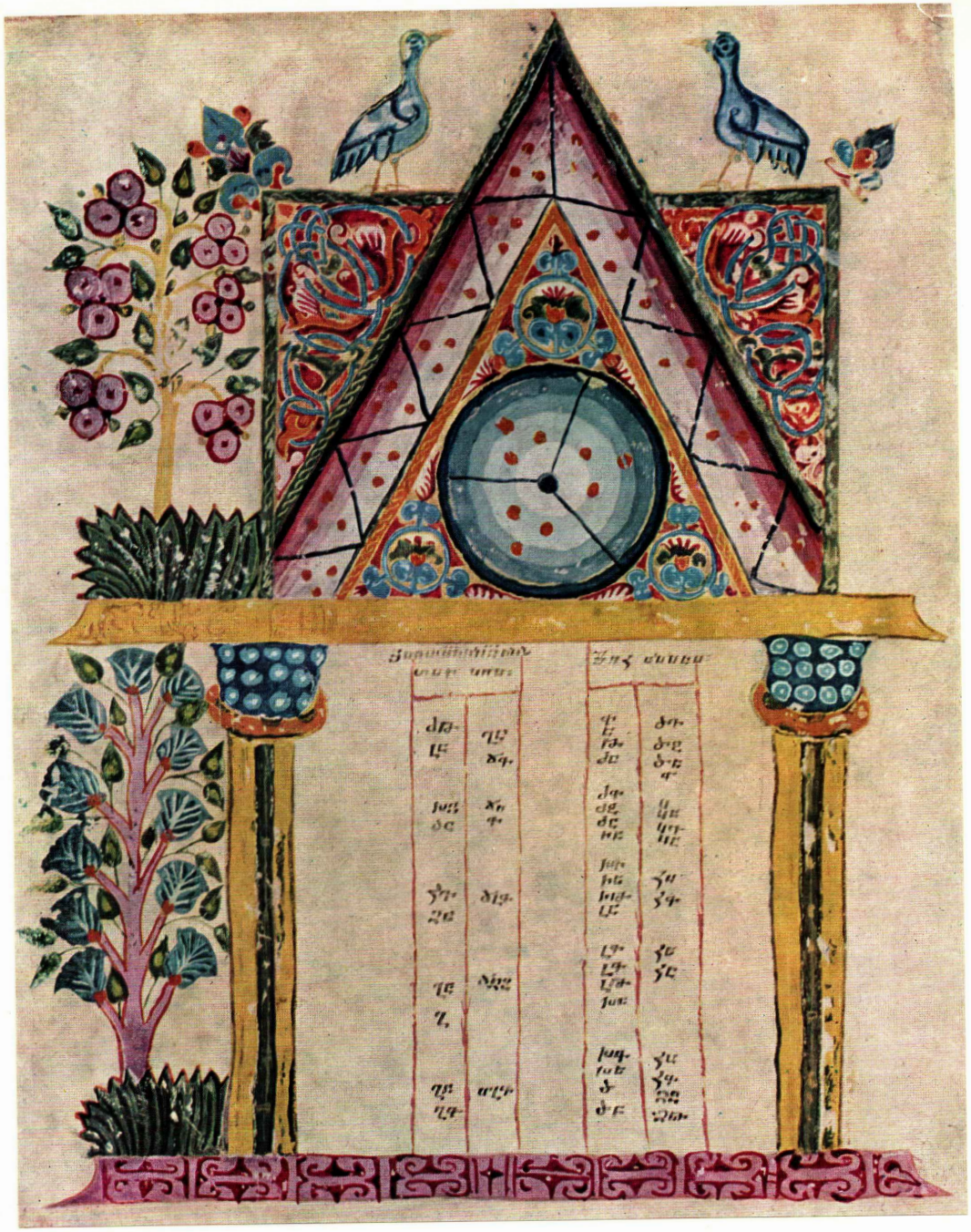
Canon Table with Birds and Plants

12 1/2 × 9 1/2″

THE GOSPEL OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Executed in Greater Armenia

(Matenadaran 2877)



The Four Evangelists

6 3/4 × 9 1/4″

THE GOSPEL OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Executed in Greater Armenia

(Matenadaran 2877)

Distinguishing features here are a selection of particularly rich and deep colors with blue backgrounds predominating, detailed execution of faces and, especially, canon tables whose unusual structure and new ornamental motifs will influence the decorative procedures of the thirteenth century.

The artist's originality is undeniable once he can free himself from academic traits. He achieves this by trying to render with the greatest possible truth that which could be easily observed but which no one had indicated to him before. The thirteenth century will see the flowering and the prevalence of this happy trend.

The Annunciation

10 5/8 × 17 7/8″

THE GOSPEL OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Executed in Greater Armenia

(Matenadaran 2877)

Title Page

12 1/2 × 10 1/4"

THE GOSPEL OF THE MIDDLE OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Executed in Romkla, Cilicia

(Matenadaran 7737)

The painters who emigrated to Cilicia from Greater Armenia took with them illustrated manuscripts as souvenirs and models. The manuscript shown here is very close in style to two others, dated respectively 1113 (University of Tübingen, MA XIII) and 1166 (Matenadaran 7347). Both were executed in Cilicia.

These three manuscripts can be dated in the second half of the twelfth century and in the beginning of the thirteenth in Greater Armenia. The monumental character of the miniatures, the rather heavy forms in the figures and architecture in the canon tables, the burgeoning on top of the canon tables of a voluminous but not too clear ornamental motif, the muted tones—all these common characteristics relate these two groups of works to one another. In making these comparisons one must take into account the relative slowness of artistic development in Greater Armenia.

The Evangelist John and His Pupil Prochoros

11 × 8 5/8″

THE GOSPEL OF THE MIDDLE OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Executed in Romkla, Cilicia

(Matenadaran 7737)

The Evangelist Mark

10 5/8 × 7 7/8″

THE GOSPEL OF THE MIDDLE OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Executed in Romkla, Cilicia

(Matenadaran 7737)

A steady rhythm of heavy forms and deep, discreet colors fills the pages of the manuscript with uncommon harmony and beauty.

This prayer book derives its name from its author, Gregory of Narek. Iconographically it is related to the *Gospel of Sebastia* (1066). The intermediate works are unknown.

The manuscript is illustrated by four portraits of Gregory Narekatsi (*i.e.,* of Narek), a writer-author of remarkable poems and songs in praise of the Virgin. He lived at the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century. He is represented variously, as a philosopher, a hermit, kneeling, and in prayer before Christ. The general tonality is soft and seeks to render the atmosphere appropriate to each scene.

The ornament of the four title pages is not yet very harmoniously composed—although the composition will improve in later manuscripts inspired by this one.

Portrait of Gregory of Narek

4 1/2 × 7 1/8″

THE NAREK OF 1173

Commissioned by Nerses of Lambron

Executed in Cilicia

(Matenadaran 1568)

This Gospel book comes from Haghbat (in the region of Lori, now Alaverti) where it was bound, but it was probably illustrated at Ani.

Its narrative miniature, the Entry into Jerusalem, reveals the new social mentality of the time. It furnishes us with precise information about the city, its cultural individuality, and the life of its inhabitants. The scene is, in fact, transferred to a contemporary setting.

Jerusalem was usually represented as a fortified city with thick walls surrounding a group of public buildings and temples. Here, on the contrary, the artist has painted an elegant pavilion decorated with wood carvings and provided with a balcony and a loggia. The latter is surmounted by a cross which, together with the double row of battlements painted on the house wall, is the only remaining trace of the old concept of Jerusalem. The owner, a bourgeois in good standing, doubtless a merchant, stands in front of the open door and welcomes his guests, Christ and two Disciples, while a Negro manservant spreads a rug under the donkey's hoofs. Traditional idlers who look from between the battlements are replaced here by a hostess who greets Christ from her window. Two trees are depicted instead of the usual one, and—a detail without precedent—on the balcony two young girls extend their hands toward the branches being cut by three young men. All the figures are in contemporary dress, with the exception of Christ and his Disciples.

The originality of the manuscript is to be explained by the cultural and social climate of the period. Also, the power of observation of the artist Margar shows him to be very familiar with the milieu in which his figures move. Society has been greatly transformed in the city (probably Ani) painted by the artist. The taste of patrons of the arts has evolved. They have brought back from their foreign travels a certain skepticism which makes them deny the mysticism of their own religion and recognize only its educational value. These influential merchants are no longer interested in sumptuous feudal miniatures, and yet they reject the works of the more modest painters. From this period date typically bourgeois works which faithfully reflect the ideology and customs of a new class of society.

The Entry into Jerusalem

9 3/4 × 7 1/2"

THE HAGHBAT GOSPEL

Painted by Margar, 1211

Executed in Armenia in the Region of Lori

(Matenadaran 6288)

This manuscript contains illustrations of eight canon tables and of the Four Evangelists. Each of the Evangelists is placed opposite the title page of his Gospel. The canon tables and the title pages are simple in composition, almost devoid of ornaments, plants, or birds, but the color is remarkable.

The Evangelists are much more interesting. A gold background is used solely to fulfill a commission of the Prince Sevadian. It is, moreover, clumsily applied and has flaked away almost entirely, while other colors are perfectly preserved.

The concentration of John the Evangelist and his communion with Heaven, whose least whisper he hears, are acutely expressed on his face and, to a lesser degree, on that of Prochoros, his pupil.

Heaven's proximity is suggested even more strongly by the diagonal composition of the miniature and the exaggeratedly outstretched arms of the Evangelist.

The Evangelist John and His Pupil Prochoros

9 3/4 × 6 3/8″

THE GOSPEL OF 1224

Executed in Khatchen for Princess Vaneni,

Daughter of Djadjur Khaghbakian,

Wife of Kuki, Son of Prince Abas Sevadian

(Matenadaran 4823)

The artist's refusal to be subservient to realism, noted in the *Gospel of 1038,* is carried to a kind of ascetism here. Beyond the artistic conventions one is aware of the extraordinary talent of the artist, who knows how to represent figures with particularly lifelike gestures and mimicry.

The mysticism of this work seems to contradict the rationalism which was becoming widespread in the thirteenth century. The fact is that in 1224 the new current of ideas had reached only the large cities and the towns near the trade routes. Everywhere else the feudal tradition was to continue for a long time.

The Evangelist Luke

9 3/4 × 6 3/8″

THE GOSPEL OF 1224

Executed in Khatchen for Princess Vaneni,

Daughter of Djadjur Khaghbakian,

Wife of Kuki, Son of Prince Abas Sevadian

(Matenadaran 4823)

ՍԲ ԱՌԱՔԵԼԻՆ ՂՈՒԿԱՍ

This manuscript bears the name of the Monastery of T'argmantchats, near Gandzha (the present Kirovabad), where it was preserved for a long time; there is nothing to prove that it was executed there. The painter, Grigor, has revived an eleventh-century tradition by illustrating his manuscript not only with canon tables, Evangelists, and title pages, but also with full-page or marginal narrative miniatures.

The Baptism of Christ

10 1/4 × 7 7/8″

THE GOSPEL OF T'ARGMANTCHATS

Executed in Siunik'

Painted by Grigor for Prince Grigor

in Memory of His Wife Asp'a, 1232

(Matenadaran 2743)

Մկրտուն Քրիստոսի

Close examination of these miniatures reveals that the painter is very much familiar with all the academic practices of the Middle Ages, but he concentrates on essential elements of the tradition. The mastery with which he handles the faces confirms this interpretation; the eye sockets and the shadows are encircled by light colors and stand out from a darker background; this simple procedure is capable of portraying the most delicate emotions.

The Annunciation

8 5/8 × 6 3/8″

THE GOSPEL OF T'ARGMANTCHATS

Executed in Siunik'

Painted by Grigor for Prince Grigor

in Memory of His Wife Asp'a, 1232

(Matenadaran 2743)

Grigor employs contrast skillfully in all its forms. His compositions are usually constructed around an intersection of diagonals (as in the Baptism of Christ, page 87) or consist of horizontals and verticals, which are emphasized by rocks, edges of garments, architecture, and accents of color. He uses tones of a narrow range of colors—a deep-blue background, muted browns and grays in proximity to light pinks and blues—or places them in violent contrast to a vivid red. He avoids an overly bright glitter of gold by mixing it with green.

The Dormition of the Virgin

9 3/4 × 7 7/8"

THE GOSPEL OF T'ARGMANTCHATS

Executed in Siunik'

Painted by Grigor for Prince Grigor

in Memory of His Wife Asp'a, 1232

(Matenadaran 2743)

The painter's predilection for contrasts is also manifest in the representation of rocks and garments. The former are represented as blocks with sharp angles, the latter in small or rounded parallel folds.

The big, smooth, dark surfaces of the architectural settings are covered by a fine tracery of white lines which breaks their monotony.

The artist masters each scene and represents it in a form as nearly perfect as possible by his control over the means employed and by his concentration and energy.

Certain peculiarities (the range of dark colors, for example, which would not be suitable for mural painting) distinguish this manuscript from other more monumental works and bring it closer to easel painting.

This work, the last before the Mongol invasion of Transcaucasia, is a summary of the practices employed in Armenia during the preceding centuries.

In spite of a long period of interruption, this significant work will still have a certain influence on the works of succeeding centuries.

The Last Supper

8 5/8 × 7 1/2″

THE GOSPEL OF T'ARGMANTCHATS

Executed in Siunik'

Painted by Grigor for Prince Grigor

in Memory of His Wife Asp'a, 1232

(Matenadaran 2743)

The patron of this work (which bears his autograph) was at one and the same time army commander, historian, patron of the arts, and renowned legislator. The high quality of this Gospel book is proof of his good taste. The numerous canon tables and title pages are treated in a style that will be taken up and enriched in subsequent Cilician works.

The canon tables of this manuscript have faultless proportions. They are decorated on the exterior by birds and plants and on the interior by a particularly complicated motif. The colors are fresh and gold is used profusely.

It is the first Cilician work in which the feasts of the Church are illustrated. The narrative miniatures which make up the rest of the manuscript are by another painter, one who is rather partial to the picturesque. The compositions, figures, and iconography are not yet completely rid of that stiffness and restraint which will disappear only gradually from Cilician works.

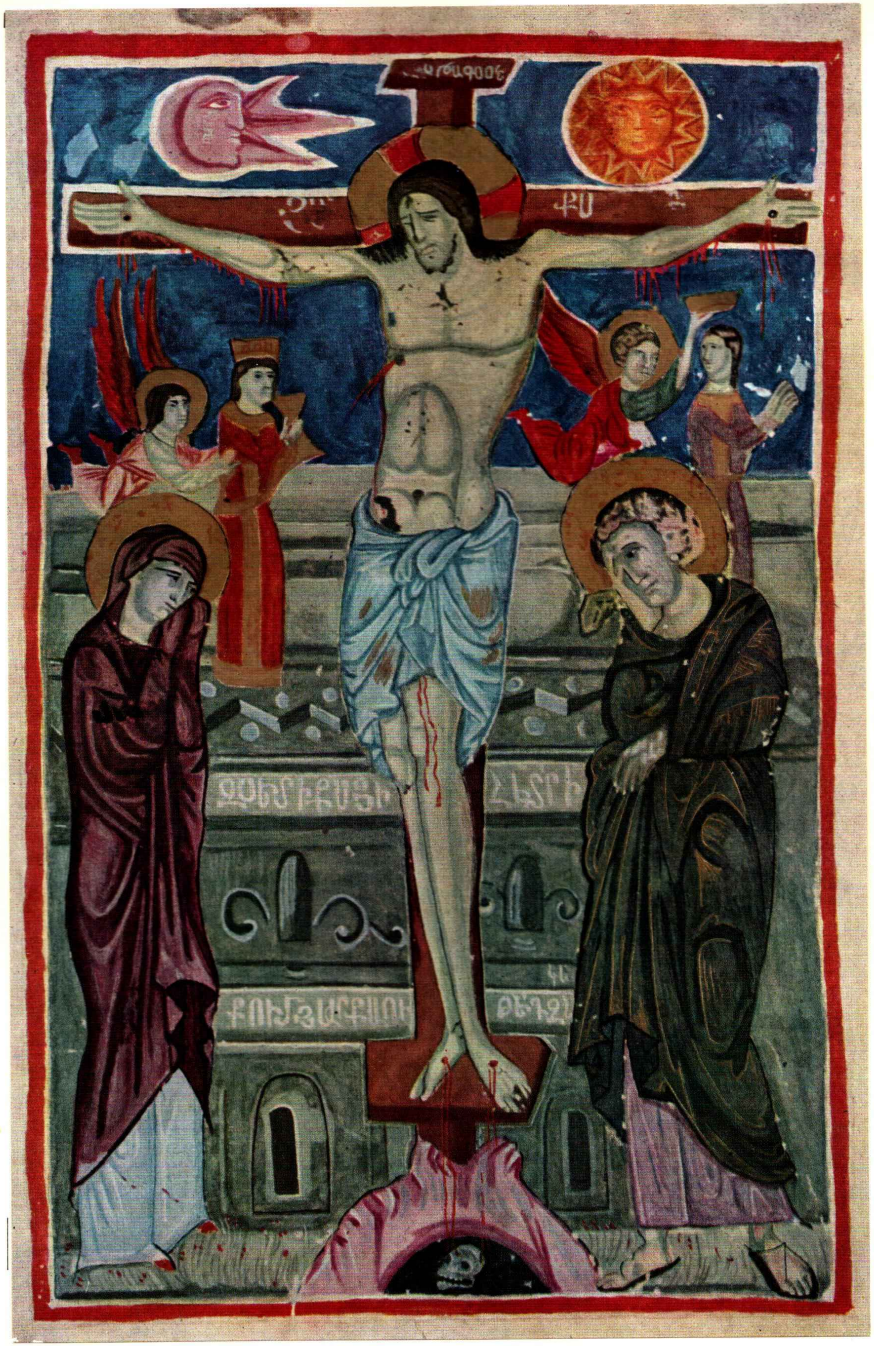
The Crucifixion

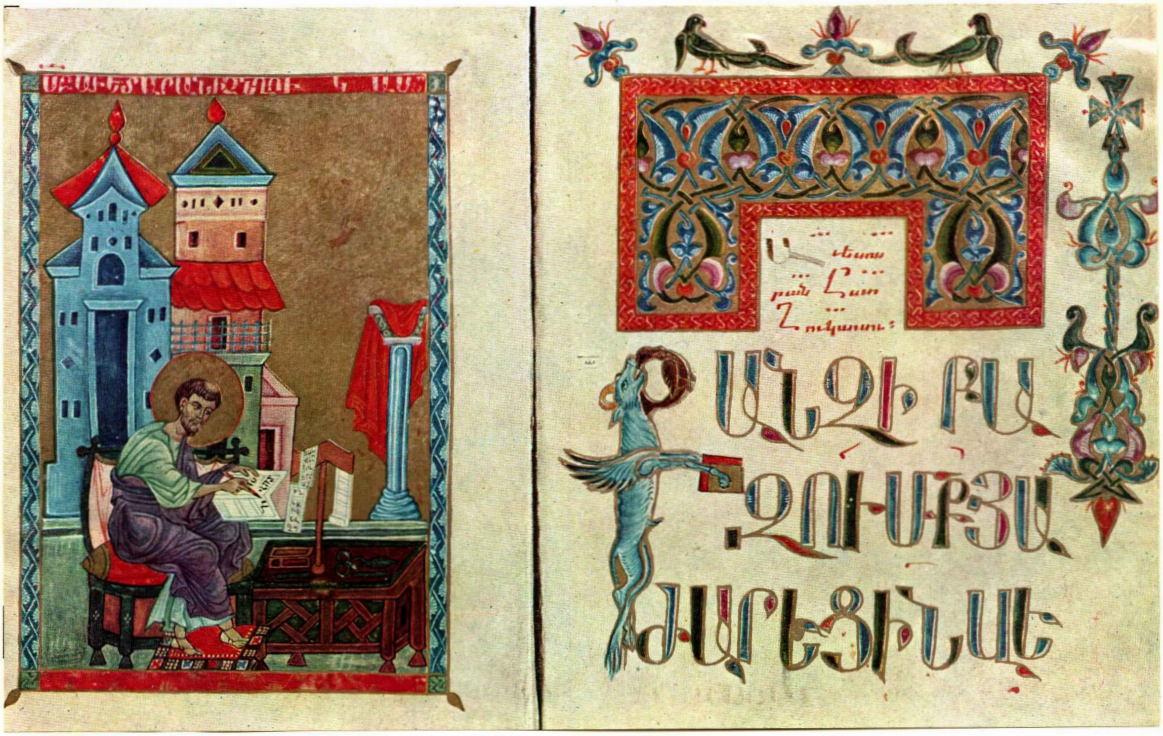
6 7/8 × 4 3/4″

GOSPEL OF THE MIDDLE OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

Executed in Cilicia for Prince Sembat the Constable

(Matenadaran 7644)





The Gospel According to St. Luke

GOSPEL OF THE MIDDLE OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

Executed in Cilicia for Prince Sembat the Constable

(Matenadaran 7644)

above, left:

The Evangelist Luke

6 5/8 × 4 5/8″

above, right:

Title Page

6 7/8 × 4 7/8″

opposite page:

The Evangelist Matthew →

6 3/4 × 4 3/4″

at left:

Pentecost

6 7/8 × 4 7/8″

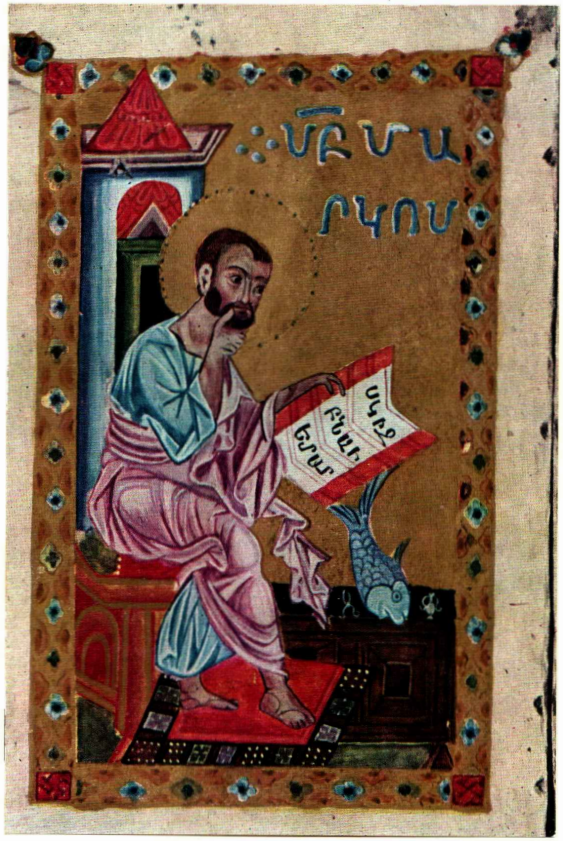
opposite page:

Detail →

Gospel of the Middle of the Thirteenth Century

Executed in Cilicia for Prince Sembat the Constable

(Matenadaran 7644)



This miniature of St. Luke in the *Gospel of 1249* illustrates the evolution of book illustration in the course of a century. Generally, the manuscripts are taller. The quality of the illustrations remains the same but the tonality of the whole changes. Colors and gold are used in proportion to each other and greater care is given to details.

The more awkward format of the book would lead one to suppose that it was not destined to be used in religious services; it was probably the property of a private individual who used it as a prayer book or consulted it in his library.

The Evangelist Luke
Title Page →

THE GOSPEL OF 1249
Executed in Cilicia
(Matenadaran 7690)

This volume of 1251 is exceptional for its period. It has only canon tables, the last two of which bear a commemorative inscription painted in blue on a gold background.

These canon tables are especially remarkable because of the beauty of their colors and the abundance of birds and plants, painted with utmost realism. Nevertheless, the drawing still remains static, even in such a dramatic scene as that of the falcon seizing a duck by the neck. The colors are discreet and the motifs simply developed.

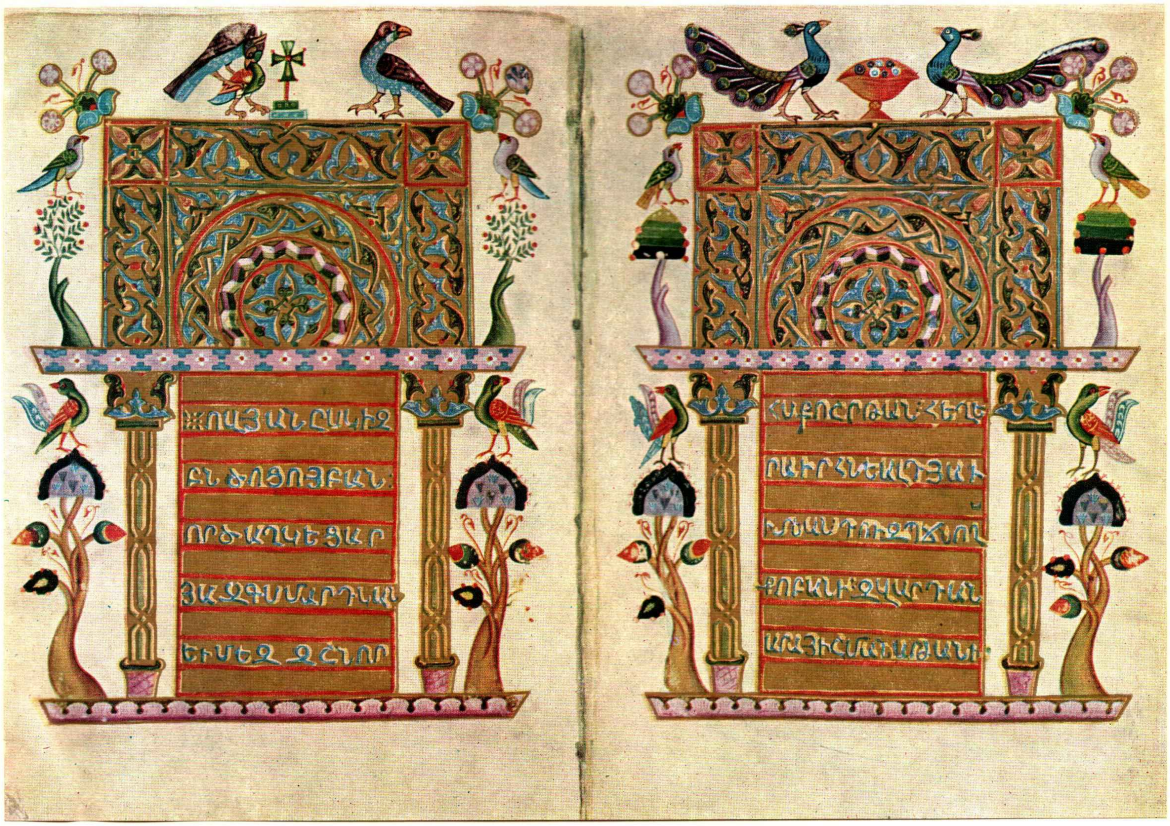
This style recalls the first manuscripts executed in Romkla and the *Prayer Book of Gregory of Narek* (1173).

Two Canon Tables with Gold Backgrounds

THE GOSPEL OF 1251

Executed in Romkla, Cilicia, for the Priest Vardan

(Matenadaran 3033)



This manuscript was begun toward the middle of the thirteenth century by a group of six painters. For unknown reasons it remained unfinished. It was discovered at a later date in the library of King Oshin. In 1320 the king offered it to his guest, Bishop Step'anos of Sebastia, who selected it, although unfinished, from among many others. The Bishop then commissioned a well-known painter, Sargis Pidzak, to complete it. With the help of a student, Pidzak filled in outlines already drawn and even retouched some of the miniatures.

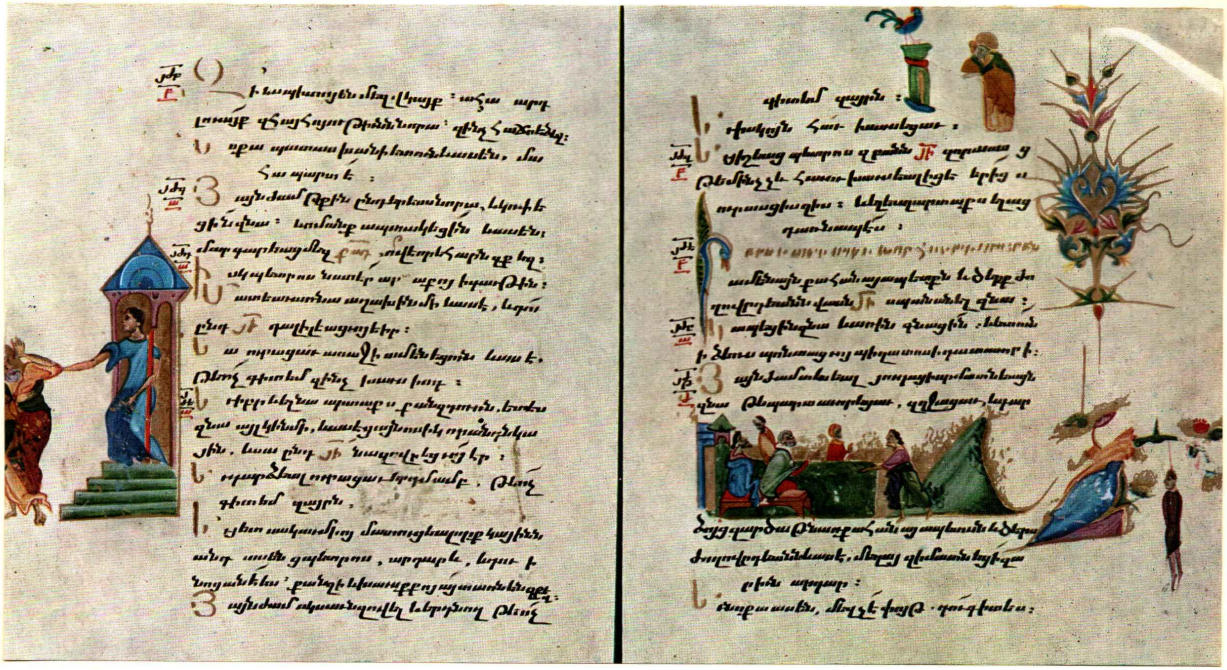
Manuscript of the Six Painters

THE GOSPEL BEGUN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

Executed in Cilicia

Completed 1320

(Matenadaran 7651)



Certain of these miniatures have been attributed to T'oros Roslin because of their general layout and the drawing of the figures. The Massacre of the Innocents, originally left unfinished, has been rather clumsily completed—especially the faces—by Sargis Pidzak. This awkwardness is even more evident if one compares the miniatures he painted to the earlier ones.

The manuscript is profusely illustrated (see pages 108, 109). The text is not written in columns but in very decorative horizontal bands.

Manuscript of the Six Painters

THE GOSPEL BEGUN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

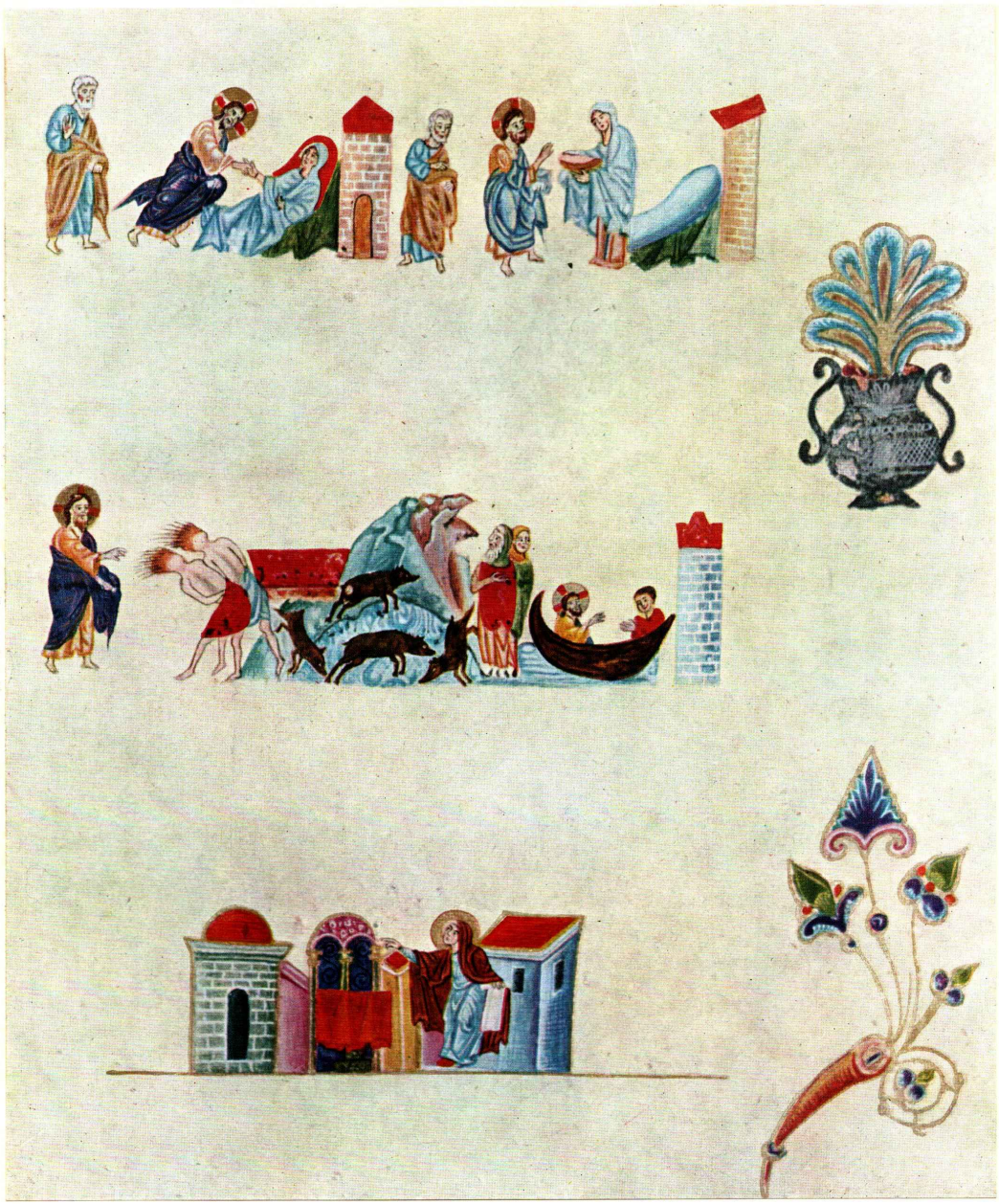
Executed in Cilicia

Completed 1320

(Matenadaran 7651)

Manuscript of the Six Painters

Series of Miniatures in the Text



The miniatures selected here are from three illustrated manuscripts believed to be the work of T'oros Roslin.

All that is known about the life of this important painter, who was a monk, comes from the commemorative inscriptions written in his manuscripts. His artistic personality, however, is easier to define, thanks to the works themselves.

There are seven manuscripts signed by him, of which five are preserved in the Library of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. The first dates 1256, the last 1268. Six unsigned manuscripts have been attributed to him; four of them are preserved in the Matenadaran at Yerevan. They date from 1250 to about 1288. If one considers only the signed manuscripts, T'oros Roslin was active for thirteen years. If one accepts the unsigned manuscripts as authentic—and this hypothesis is not without foundation—his career lasted until 1288, that is to say, for thirty years. Indeed, there is an astonishing resemblance between both the substance and form in the commemorative inscriptions of all the manuscripts. The same is found in less important inscriptions.

As for the miniatures, they present a great variety, artistically as well as technically. Their quality enables us to reconstruct the exceptional personality of their creator. It is the smaller illustrations, rather than the full-page miniatures, which reveal it. These illustrations are to be found at the bottom of pages, in the margins, in the canon tables, or on the title pages.

T'oros Roslin was especially interested in depicting faces and various positions of the human body. Some faces measure only two or three millimeters, but all express a perfectly recognizable emotion: sorrow, fear, pride, anger, or astonishment. Despite their minute size, the painter succeeds in making them beautiful or ugly, young or old.

Because of this interest in all that pertains to man, an interest exceptional for this period, T'oros Roslin may be considered as an isolated precursor of the Renaissance. He finds inspiration not in the works of his contemporaries, still stamped with tradition, but in his own observation of life and creates an entirely new style in his numerous little illustrations.

THREE MANUSCRIPTS BY T'OROS ROSLIN

Executed in Cilicia

The manifold aspects (political, economic, religious, and artistic) of life in Cilicia in the thirteenth century are reflected in the paintings of T'oros Roslin. The experience of this cultured artist, his creativity, tireless curiosity, and knowledge of the arts of East and West, and especially of his own country, enable him to express himself freely, to choose themes from all lands and periods, including the current scene. This explains why certain details are incomprehensible today. He represents his figures in all possible aspects in small sketches buried in luxuriant vegetation. Sometimes he quotes from a foreign work without modifying its style, and borrows fauna and flora from all the then-known countries, achieving a unity of style by painting his miniatures in a fixed range of colors.

The work of T'oros Roslin not only centers the art of book illustration at this time in Cilicia but also makes it reach heights never before attained, while contemporary Italians, predecessors of Giotto, are still painting stiff and less expressive figures.

It is almost certain that T'oros Roslin was familiar with Western art of his time. At the end of the thirteenth century numerous Latin manuscripts had come into Cilicia, especially through princely marriages. It is possible that, struck by the immobility of the figures in the Latin books, T'oros Roslin sought to make their movements more supple. In last analysis, he borrowed only certain motifs from Western art, motifs which are, moreover, buried within the luxuriance of his own imagination.

Byzantine art was also known to T'oros Roslin, but its influence is perceived only in certain iconographic details. It is the general revision of pictorial principles in the thirteenth century that is responsible for the originality of his compositions.

All the characteristics of the art of Roslin, realistic details and dramatic emotions, are to be found at the beginning of the fourteenth century in Kariye Cami, but in a disciplined form which has lost the effervescence that made Roslin's miniatures spill over and caused him to paint in the margins. He communicated a sense of movement not only to men and animals but even to plant motifs and decorated initials.

Ordination

7 7/8 × 6 3/4″

THE GOSPEL OF 1287

Executed in Cilicia

Attributed to T'oros Roslin

(Matenadaran 197)

The manuscript of 1287 is profusely illustrated. Unfortunately, some of the canon tables have suffered from humidity and their colors, particularly the blues, have flaked.

The Annunciation

7 7/8 × 6 3/4″

THE GOSPEL OF 1287

Executed in Cilicia

Attributed to T'oros Roslin

(Matenadaran 197)

The Virgin Mary is beautiful and graceful in all the compositions. She is particularly pretty and not without what might be called coquetry in the Annunciation.

The Evangelist John and His Pupil Prochoros

8 5/8 × 7 1/8″

THE GOSPEL OF 1287

Executed in Cilicia

Attributed to T'oros Roslin

(Matenadaran 197)

The painter seeks to vary the faces; some are ugly, others are executed in dark tones, as, for example, St. John and his disciple Prochoros. The frames of the miniatures are ornamented at the corners with floral designs or with a delicate motif. Many details are in gold relief.

The range of colors is generally very wide, but the three dominant hues in all the miniatures are green, rose-violet, and blue. Gold, used for the background and for some details, unifies this profusion of colors. The very lifelike figures are in perfect harmony with the rocky landscapes and architectural elements. The settings are far from being conventional, and one is aware that the painter is interested in man and his many attitudes.

The Descent into Limbo

7 7/8 × 6 3/4″

THE GOSPEL OF 1287

Executed in Cilicia

Attributed to T'oros Roslin

(Matenadaran 197)

This manuscript, executed during the second half of the twelfth century, has undergone numerous transformations. It is made up of two manuscripts, close to each other in style; they were restored at the same time and bound together. Therefore, only part of the whole volume, in particular the canon tables, may be attributed to T'oros Roslin.

The predominant colors of this manuscript are the same as those of the preceding one (green, deep mauve, and blue), but, on the other hand, the figures are much less animated, less expressive, and so, closer to those of the painter's first period. They are witnesses rather than actors.

The canon tables and certain title pages, on the contrary, are filled exclusively with animated and realistic scenes: hunts, animals fighting, birds of prey attacking, quadrupeds and birds, horsemen, and actors. Miniscule scenes from the Old and New Testaments or figures of Apostles and Prophets can be seen on the capitals and bases of the columns of the canons.

The Raising of Lazarus

10 1/4 × 7 1/2"

THE GOSPEL OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

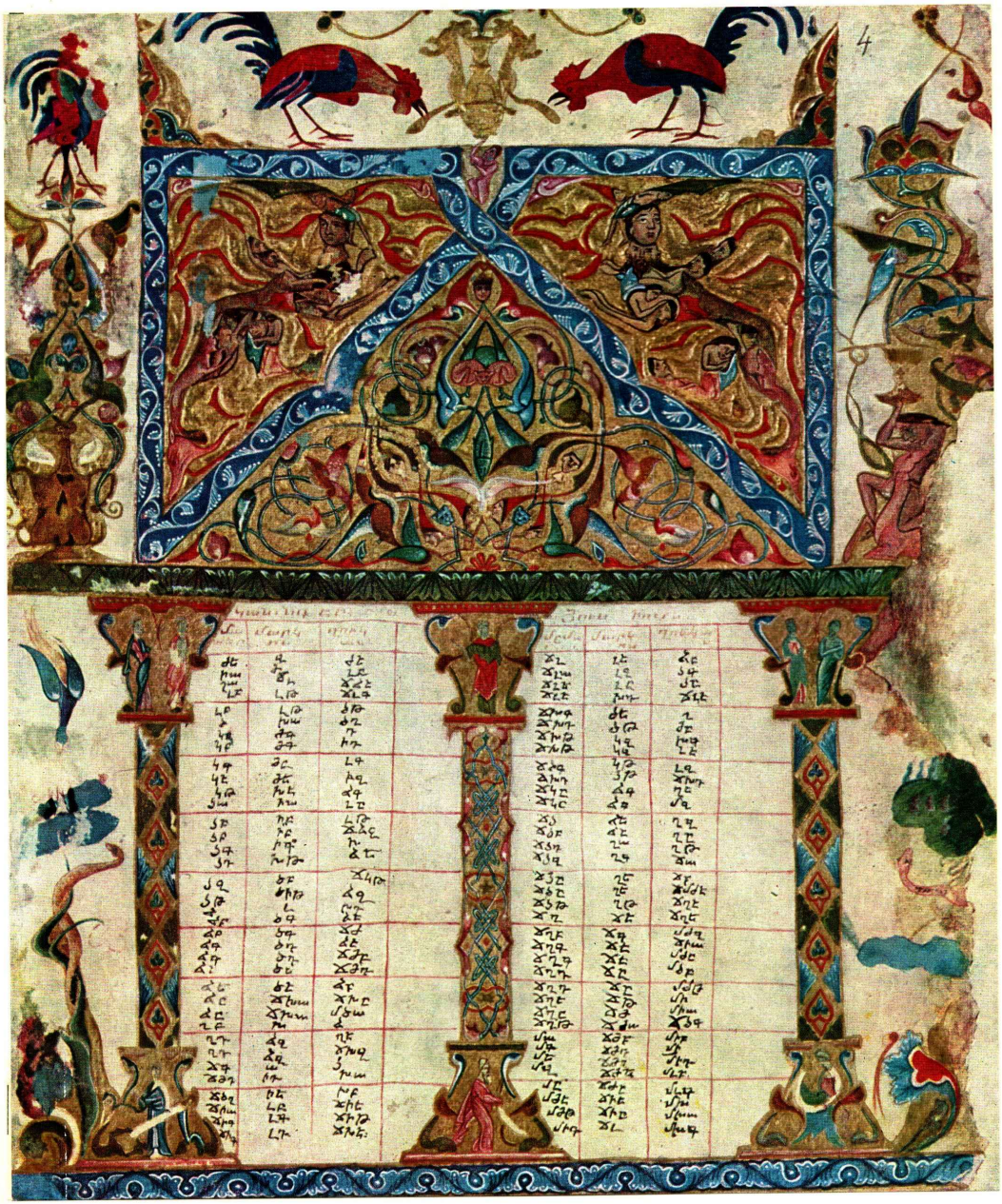
Executed in Cilicia

Attributed to T'oros Roslin

(Matenadaran 9422)

The Evangelist Mark. 9 1/8 × 7 1/2″

THE GOSPEL OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY
Executed in Cilicia. Attributed to T'oros Roslin. (Matenadaran 9422)



Canon Table with Fantastic Creatures. 9 1/2 × 7 7/8″

THE GOSPEL OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

Executed in Cilicia. Attributed to T'oros Roslin. (Matenadaran 9422)

To be noted particularly in the rectangle above the columns of the canon table (page 123) is a fantastic animal composed of human figures in various postures, probably a motif of Indian origin. Usually when creating such a beast a painter would use *other* animals, not human beings.

The canon tables, also, in addition to their primary function take on the form of altars, stage sets, arenas, etc.

Several folios are transformed into jeweled pieces of great value by being covered with polished gold in relief as seen also in the manuscripts of 1287 and 1288. This was according to the wishes of the patrons; they wanted to have a precious book in their library, the creation of a famous painter.

The Annunciation

9 1/8 × 7 1/2″

THE GOSPEL OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

Executed in Cilicia

Attributed to T'oros Roslin

(Matenadaran 9422)

The *Lectionary of 1288* is the last manuscript attributed to T'oros Roslin. At that time Roslin was probably already advanced in years, but this did not affect the quality of the manuscript. Rather, it is a synthesis of all the accomplishments developed by the painter in the course of his career.

The title page has a curious composition. A bust of Christ in a medallion of precious blue enamel occupies the center of the vignette; this is an arrangement frequently found in Cilician manuscripts of the same style. On either side of the portrait bust gray and blue dogs stand guard in Heaven and repel dragons with open jaws.

Here is proof that T'oros Roslin knew Oriental art. The dragons are indeed Iranian in origin, the celestial dogs, Chinese.

Manuscript Page with Christ Emmanuel

12 1/2 × 9 1/8"

THE LECTIONARY OF 1288

Executed in Cilicia for King Het'um II

Attributed to T'oros Roslin

(Matenadaran 979)

Ամարիլ · Զ

Ամենքը Զծածնին

Իպաքարեալ յուժամա

տացցնա Ուրախալորբերն

Աղամանկ · Յարկեցած կարդ · կցորդ · ԼՐ տացե զքանիորոյք ։

Հնթեցուած Յ տակաց։

ՊՄՐՈՅԱԼԲՈ ԻՐ

Ի ԹՈՒՆՍԲՈՒՍԵՆ Ի

ծառ կենաց ։ բար ձգինտա

բաժամ ոգիք անաւրինաց ։

եթեարդարն հաշիւ կեցցէ ։

իսկմեղաւորն համպարիշտն

ուրպտանկցին ։ որսերէ զը

խրատ · սիրէ զիմաստութիւն ։

կոյանտեա զյանդիմանութիւն

թիւն · անմիտ է ։ լաւ է որդը

տանէ շնորհս իւր ։ այր ա

նաւրէն · կարկեաց է ։ ոչ յա

ղողեցի մարդոյ յանիրաւութիւնէ ։ արմատք արդարոց · ոչ հատցին ։ կենդրապլուխ · զը սակ է առնիւրում։ Հնթեցուած

Իպաքարեալ Մարդարէ։

ՈՒՐԱԽՍՈՒԹԻՒՆ ԵՒ

ուրախութիւն դուստրս իմովնի ։ զեահ հաւատեկից կենդակեցայց է մինչ բոմ ասեցոր ։ հապաւինեա ցենազգաբ բաղրամբ խորհրդոյ յայնմիկ · հեղեցեն նմա ժողովուրդ · կենդակեցենեմինչ բոմ։

The Entry into Jerusalem

11 3/4 × 9 1/2″

THE LECTIONARY OF 1288

Executed in Cilicia for King Het'um II

Attributed to T'oros Roslin

(Matenadaran 979)

The four hundred pages of this manuscript are illustrated not only with narrative miniatures but also with marginal illustrations and illuminated initials, sometimes two or three to a page. Originally no painting was signed; the signatures found in the manuscript in its present state are of a later date—and some of them even are false.

The Presentation in the Temple

12 3/8 × 9 1/8″

THE LECTIONARY OF 1288

Executed in Cilicia for King Het'um II

Attributed to T'oros Roslin

(Matenadaran 979)

The text of the manuscript is richer in detail than that of the Gospel itself, hence the greater freedom of the painter in representing the customary scenes.

The Three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace

13 × 9 1/2″

THE LECTIONARY OF 1288

Executed in Cilicia for King Het'um II

Attributed to T'oros Roslin

(Matenadaran 979)

The main incident is frequently the center of a composition which also contains the story of the event leading up to the central motif; a corresponding scene often takes place in Heaven.

տեմք։ կարասուղէ փրկել զմեզ
ի հնոցէ հրոյդ բորբոքելոյ։ եւ
ձեռայ քոյսարքայապետս սցե՛
զմեզ։ ապաթեռչ այսինչ յայտ
նե՛ լսցեքեզ։ զնզգեսուքոմեք սէ
պաշտեմք։ եպատկերիդ ոսկւոյ
զորկանգնեցեր երկերրչ պատա
նեմք։

այնժամ նաբուքոդոնոսոր
լսեալ սրամտութեամբ։ եւ
գոյն երեսայ նորա շրջեցա՛ եվե
բայսեդրաքայ մեսաքայ եաբեդ
նագովի։ եասէ ջեռուցէք զը
հնոյն եթանասիկ յոյժ։ զնմին
եվանճանայսեսցի։ եւ զոր
հինգ զաւորքսաւ զաւրս թեք
կապեցին զանդրաք մեսաքայ ե

եպաբեդնագով։ արկանել ի հը
նոյ հրոյն բորբոքելոյ։

այնժամ զբնայնոքիկ կա
պեցան պատմուճանսաք վար
սեսաք։ արտախորակաք եւ
զանկապանսաք իրեանց։ եւ ան
կեցան ի մէջ հնոյն հրոյն բոր
բոքելոյ։ զի հրամանն թագաւո
րին սաստկանայր։ եհնոյն բորբո
քեալ սաստել եթանասիկ յոյժ։
եերեք եան նոքասեդրաքայ մեսաքայ
եաբեդնագով։ անկան ի մէջ հնո
ցին կապեալք։ եհրեշտակն ի մէջ
հրոյն։ աւրհնեին զնագովեին զործ։

արեսաւ զարեա եեկայ յա
ղաթեայսպես։ երայ զբերա ն
իր ի մէջ հրոյն։ եասէ։

Jonah Being Swallowed by the Whale

THE LECTIONARY OF 1288

Jonah Being Cast Up by the Whale

THE LECTIONARY OF 1288

The Descent from the Cross and *The Entombment*

13 × 9 1/2″

THE LECTIONARY OF 1288

Executed in Cilicia for King Het'um II

Attributed to T'oros Roslin

(Matenadaran 979)

The Descent from the Cross and the Entombment have this characteristic double construction, which does not detract from the unity of the whole composition. The despairing gesture of St. John, his face in his hands, is particularly well caught by the painter.

վերայ ոյժ · եւ մանանաւբէնոյ
թեանց նոցա մատնեցեալ ։
Սաղմոս երգ Լցուրք բանեցին զ
պահանդէսն իմ ։ Հաւատ
բան Հատ Մարգարէի ։
ԳԻՐՔԵՒԵՐԵԿՈՅՏԵՂԻ
եկնայլսմն մեծատունն յարիմ ա
թեայ · որում անուն էր յովսէփ ։
որ աշակերտեցեալ էր նա ։ սա
մատուցեալ առաքելոյն խնդ
բեաց զմարմինն ։ յայնժամ մ
պիղատոս հրամայեաց տալ զմ
արմինն ։ Եւ առեալ զմարմին
յովսէփ · պատեաց սբ կտաւ ոսկ
եղծեալ գերեզմանի զորմոցեաց
իւրմէ ։ եւ թաւալեցուցեալ կա
փարիչ դրանգերեզմանին վեմ
մի մեծ · գնաց ։
Նոքերեքարիսամ մագդալէ
նացի եւ մարիամն ։ նստե
լն հանդէպ գերեզ
մանին ։

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Monastery of Tat'ev was one of the most important cultural centers in Armenia. Its leaders were at once great scholars and important secular figures. One of the most illustrious was Grigor Tat'evatsi, painter and teacher of painting.

Toward the end of the fourteenth century he illustrated a Gospel written in 1297 with a few miniatures which reveal his talent. These miniatures recall the T'argmantchats Gospel (pages 87–93) in their subtle plays of browns and muted blues, of vivid reds and yellows.

Their composition is elegant but restrained in style. The artist chooses from reality details which assume great ornamental value (the openwork crib in the Nativity, etc.).

The colors are selected with perfect taste. The faces, with finely drawn features, are enhanced by spots of red on the cheeks.

This manuscript must not be considered as the first one of the School of Tat'ev; an atelier of painting had been in existence in the Monastery for a very long time. Nevertheless, this manuscript, although a product of the tradition developed in this atelier, also contributed in some measure to the creation of the style peculiar to the School of Tat'ev.

The Nativity

9 1/8 × 6 5/8″

THE GOSPEL WRITTEN IN 1297

Executed in the Monastery of Tat'ev

Illuminated in the Fourteenth Century

by Grigor Tat'evatsi

(Matenadaran 7482)

This book is illustrated with numerous marginal miniatures. This arrangement was already to be found in the collection of homilies (*Djarentir*) of Mush of 1204 (Matenadaran 7729).

Although these two manuscripts differ in style, in their marginal miniatures they employ motifs not found anywhere else. These themes are pagan in inspiration, without any religious significance. Those most frequently used are from the cult of the sun and from the harvest festivals. They give to the whole manuscript a generally very lively air. The sun is represented simply and poetically. Sometime it is a disk, sometime a ring decorated with abstract motifs or with human faces from which issues a ray crowned by a flower, a bough, or a bird. One also finds the Tree of Life growing here and there in fields.

The Four Evangelists are without marked individuality. The painter has a predilection for nature. In these miniatures he focuses his attention on plant life at the expense of the figures. This can be seen by comparing the foliage in the spandrels here with the figure of St. Luke.

The Evangelist Luke

THE GOSPEL OF 1304

Executed in Nakhitchevan by Simeon

(Matenadaran 3722)

փախեանի գերեղմա
նէն. քանզի զահի
հարեալէին. առչու
մեք ինչ ասացին
զի երկնչէին.։

Title Page, the Gospel According to St. Luke

THE GOSPEL OF 1304
Executed in Nakhitchevan by Simeon
(Matenadaran 3722)

Nakhitchevan is rather far from Lake Van. Nevertheless, the *Gospel of 1304,* as well as numerous other manuscripts which preceded it, is stylistically one of the pillars of the School of Van.

զիրաշ
ոմք յաւժարեց
ին վերըստինկար
զպատմութիւնն
վասնիրացն հաստ
ատեցոցիմեզ· որպէ
ս աւանդեցինմեզ
որիսկզբանէ ական
ատեսք և սպասաւ-

The unknown author of this manuscript disposes his figures according to whim. He achieves unity of composition by a choice of vivid colors, rhythmically arranged throughout the composition.

The Biblical and historical scenes of the miniatures are full of contemporary details, drawn from the artist's milieu.

His learning, keen sense of decoration, and boldness of composition are all evident.

Abraham Entertaining the Angels

7 7/8 × 11"

THE GOSPEL OF 1316

Probably executed in Turuberan

(Matenadaran 4818)

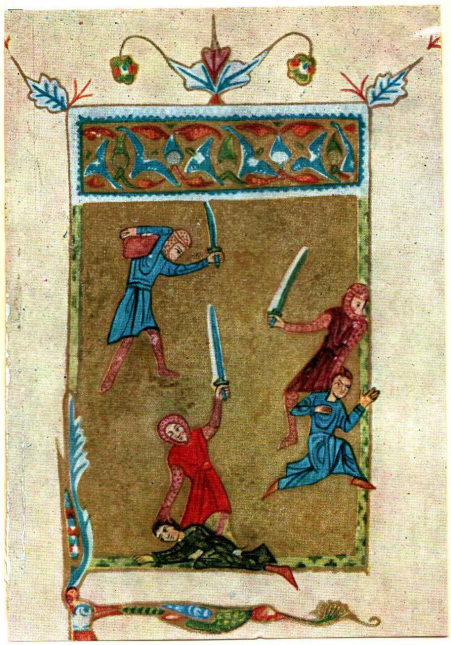
The Annunciation

9 1/8 × 12 1/2″

THE GOSPEL OF 1316

Probably executed in Turuberan

(Matenadaran 4818)



The Monastery of Gladsor played a very important part in the history of Armenian culture in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. At the head of this Monastery were eminent scholars who also directed other establishments, among them the University and the school of painting. Exchanges of students and painters had always taken place between Cilicia and the Monastery.

T'oros Taronatsi executed several manuscripts at the Monastery, one of the first being this Bible. The manuscript contains a multitude of small scenes, delicately framed. The themes are extraordinarily varied: erection of buildings, martyrdom of saints, crucifixion of idolaters, etc. Frames, dimensions, and certain details of these miniatures (garments, furnishings) are undeniably of Western origin. T'oros Taronatsi probably saw Occidental miniatures in Cilicia. On the other hand, it is not impossible that the Monastery possessed Latin manuscripts imported by the Cilicians or the Uniats (Armenians seeking to unite the National Armenian Church to Rome), then numerous and influential in Siunik'.

Marginal Illustration,
The Massacre of the Innocents

THE BIBLE OF 1318
Executed in the Monastery of Gladsor, Siunik'
Painted by T'oros Taronatsi (also called Mshetsi)
(Matenadaran 206)

Five years after the Bible of 1318, T'oros Taronatsi finished a richly decorated Gospel. Its canon tables are particularly well executed. The canons all have the same form: various scenes and motifs (an angel blinding a devil, parrots, ostriches, crocodiles, etc.) surround an ornamental motif glittering with gold and inspired by plant forms.

Because it is worthy of study, let us describe in detail the title page of the Gospel of St. John. The Mother of God, suckling the Child (theme of Oriental origin), is seated at top center. She is protected by two angels who present chalices to the Child. Below, in the grass, a doe suckles her fawn in the presence of a stag. This scene is a symbolic replica of the one above—a mother and child are represented in both. A large decorated initial, composed of the symbols of the Evangelists, is terminated by a seated, youthful Christ. To the right of the letter is an eagle, symbol of the Evangelist St. John. All the parts of the letter are linked together and form a symbolic whole.

Canon Table with an Angel Blinding a Devil

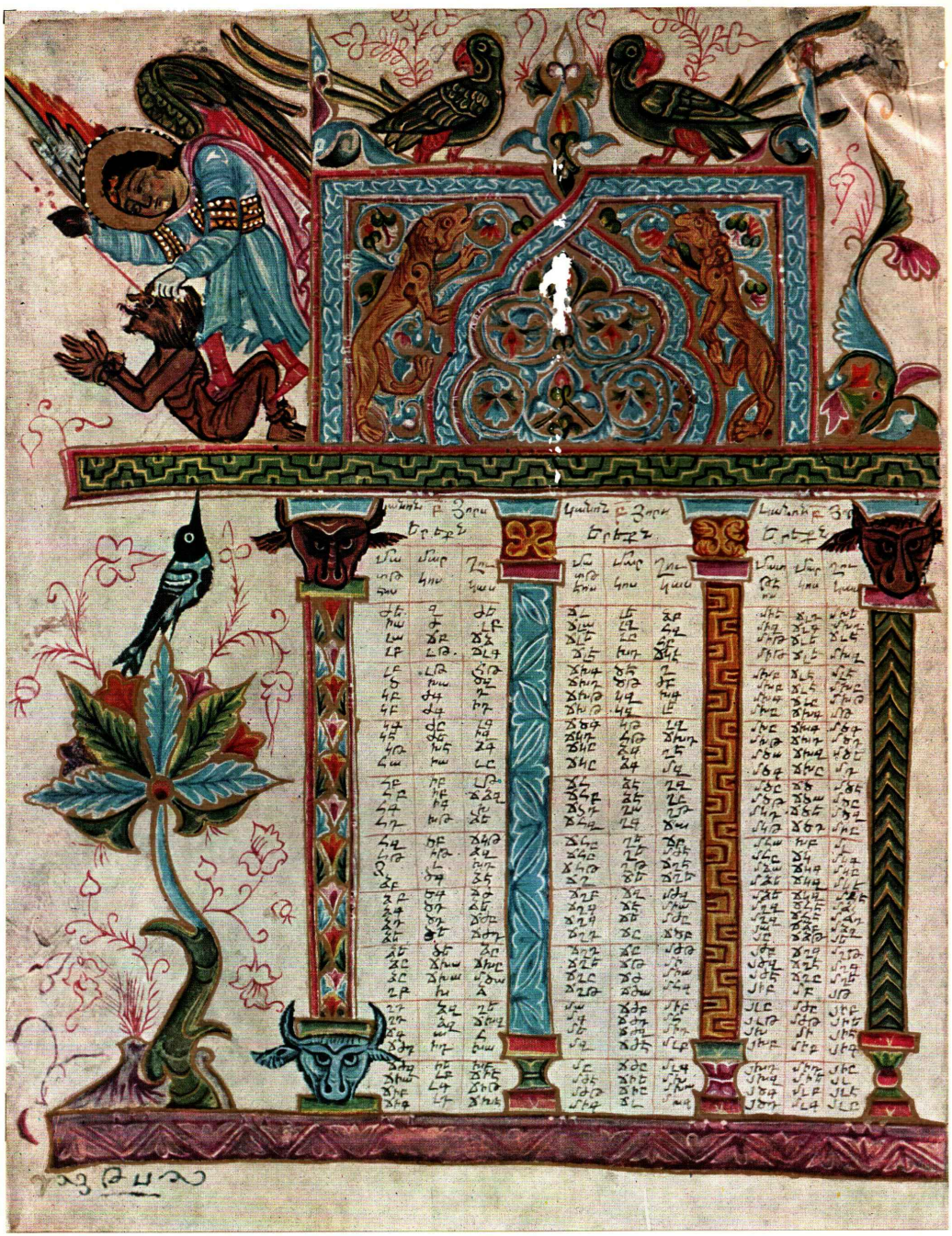
8 5/8 × 6 5/8″

THE GOSPEL OF 1323

Executed in the Monastery of Gladsor, Siunik'

Painted by T'oros Taronatsi (also called Mshetsi)

(Matenadaran 6289)



Fantastic birds and figures in hats of Byzantine origin serve as marginal ornaments.

The narrative miniatures are clearly of poorer quality. The execution is dry and monotonous; the garish colors do not harmonize.

The School of Gladsor, to which T'oros Taronatsi belonged, borrowed much from Cilicia, yet it could often be original itself.

Marginal Miniatures

THE GOSPEL OF 1323

Executed in the Monastery of Gladsor, Siunik'

Painted by T'oros Taronatsi (also called Mshetsi)

(Matenadaran 6289)

The Visitation

5 7/8 × 3 7/8″

THE GOSPEL OF 1332

Executed in the Monastery of Surkhat, Crimea

Painted by Grigor

(Matenadaran 7664)

This Gospel has a technical peculiarity which accounts for its general tonality and the poor preservation of its colors. It is painted on paper in tempera. The manuscripts of Surkhat which were modeled on this one were painted in gouache and their colors are more resistant.

In spite of the influence of Armenian tradition, the miniatures in this Gospel of 1332 are full of innovations adopted in large part from fresco technique: thin colors, little contrast in drapery folds, etc.

It is possible that Grigor Tat'evatsi became familiar with the art of fresco painting either in Theodosia (not far from Surkhat) or, more likely, in the Balkans where Byzantine influence made itself felt during the Paleologean period.

The Denial of St. Peter

6 1/4 × 4 1/8″

THE GOSPEL OF 1332

Executed in the Monastery of Surkhat, Crimea

Painted by Grigor

(Matenadaran 7664)

This manuscript evolved from a certain number of works which we have already studied: *Etchmiadzin Gospel* (989), *Gospel of 1038,* and manuscripts of the eleventh century (grouped under number 974 at the Matenadaran). These diverse tendencies fused at the beginning of the fourteenth century in the School of Van, which later divided into several branches. The School of Agkt'amar was the most typical of these up to the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The style of this Gospel is already homogeneous. Only a portion of the miniatures are full page; more frequently the scenes are one above another. The frame is a simple line. There is no background; landscape and architectural settings are reduced to a minimum (an arcade for scenes which take place in an interior, water at the feet of Christ in the Baptism). The folds of garments are composed of small, delicate, not very marked strokes and are usually in the same tone as the rest of the composition. The faces are animated by the treatment of the eyes; the proportions of the body are respected, and the gestures, although rather formal, are, nevertheless, expressive.

The principal colors are red and blue. There is little variety in the gradation of tones and gold is totally lacking. The other colors are rather light except for some shadows The canon tables are slender and elegant.

The characteristics of this Gospel show a style which will be that of all the works of the School of Van. These characteristics serve, too, to explain the basic traits of the artist: on the one hand, his power of observation and his realism, common to members of the middle class; on the other, his allegiance to the new dogmas of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a period of religious change attributed to the influence of the Uniats. Many manuscripts of this School were commissioned by priests.

The Nativity

9 1/8 × 7 1/2"

THE GOSPEL OF 1332

Executed in the region of Lake Van (Bitlis)

(Matenadaran 9423)

The Teaching of the Alphabet

7 1/8 × 5 1/2"

MANUSCRIPT OF

THE FOURTEENTH-FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Executed in the region of Lake Van

Painted by Dzerun

(Matenadaran 4777)

This is the only remaining folio of a manuscript dating from the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century. It was executed by Dzerun in the region of Lake Van.

To be noted are the simple wooden chairs and the costumes; these would seem to be modeled on contemporary house furnishings and dress.

Rstakès has a more pronounced personality than Dzerun. He eliminates all frames and paints his numerous illustrations on pages facing the text, thus making his miniatures somewhat resemble tapestries.

His figures blend into their surroundings; he achieves this effect by the patterns of the garments' folds. The colors used by Rstakès are also inspired by tapestries. This decorative manner of treating the figures does not detract from their individuality or from their respective importance in the scene.

Canon Table with Prophet

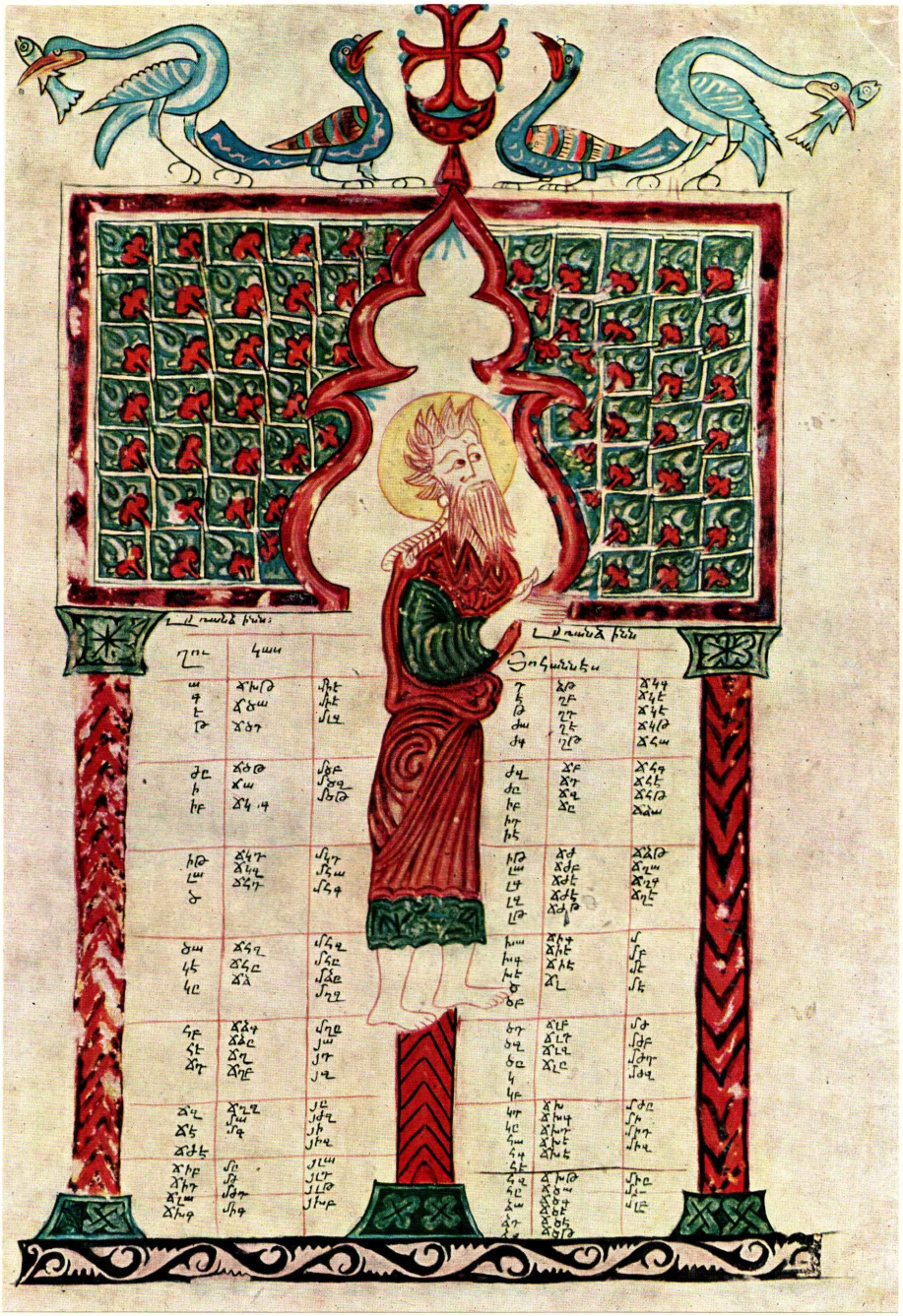
9 1/2 × 6 1/4″

THE GOSPEL OF 1397

Executed in the region of Lake Van

Painted by Rstakès

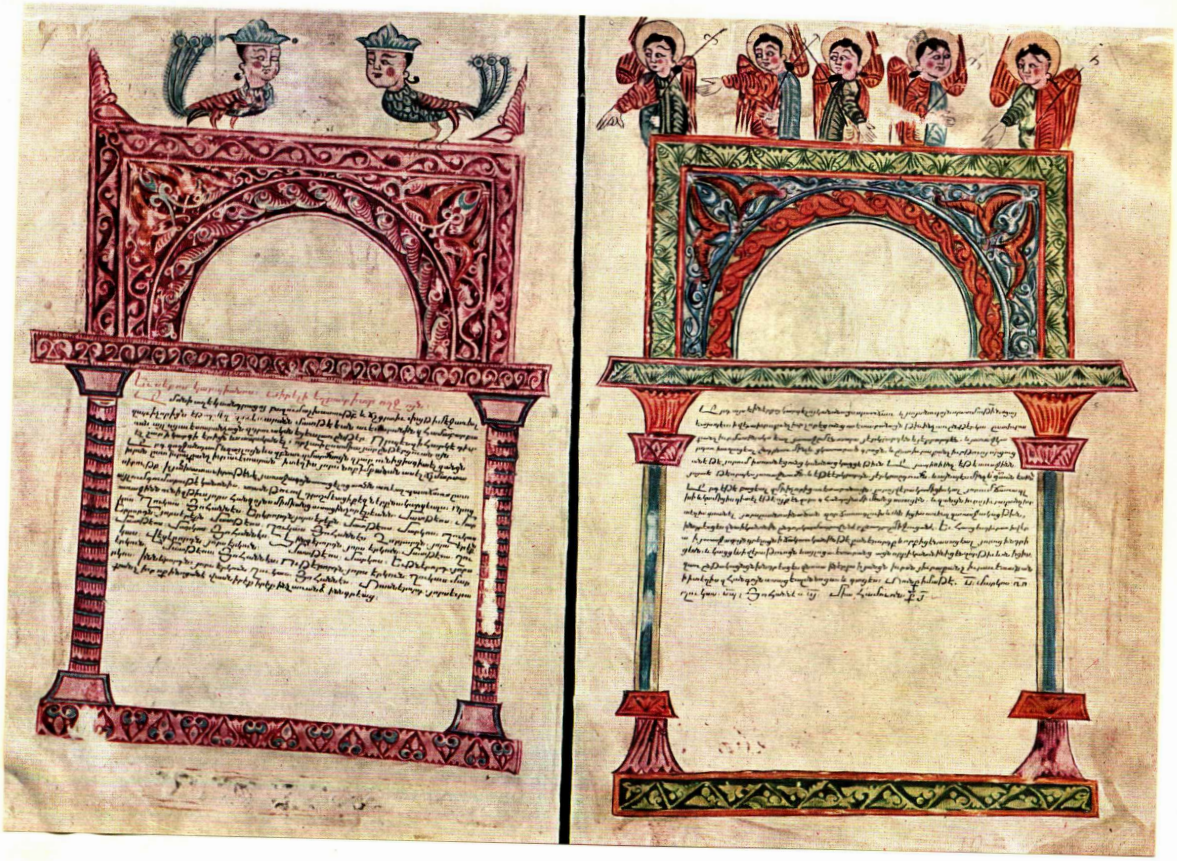
(Matenadaran 7629)



Canon Tables with Fantastic Birds and Angels

THE GOSPEL OF 1397
Executed in the region of Lake Van
Painted by Rstakès
(Matenadaran 7629)

The richness of Rstakès' decorative invention is also evident in the marginal sketches, half-plant, half-animal (birds, sphinx, etc.), inspired by the sculpture of the church of Aght'amar. The canon tables are less well executed and rather monotonous, in spite of a profusion of ornament.



Rstakès' iconographic innovations are too numerous to be listed, but all are significant.

His habit of treating figures and ornamental motifs as equally important will be taken up and developed at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century by the School of Erzerum.

The Entry into Jerusalem
and *Discourse with the Disciples*
11 × 7 1/2″

THE GOSPEL OF 1397
Executed in the region of Lake Van
Painted by Rstakès
(Matenadaran 7629)

This is the second known manuscript to bear the name of the Monastery of Tat'ev. Like the first, the Gospel written in 1297, its miniatures are undated. Nevertheless, it can be dated later than the other because its style and technique are considerably developed beyond those of the first manuscript.

The background and certain details of the miniatures are covered with a very delicate motif reminiscent of printed cloth. The illustrations become an uninterrupted, restless surface because background and figures are closely united.

Architectural details are enclosed in precise crenelations. Cloth is covered with minute motifs of flowers, dots, or squares. Finally, especially to be noticed is the lateral ornament of the title page, an elongated bouquet of almost real flowers, in a tall, elegant vase.

Grigor was visibly inspired by T'oros Taronatsi, but his miniatures are in line with popular taste, unlike those of the School of Gladsor.

Title Page with Figures and Floral Motifs

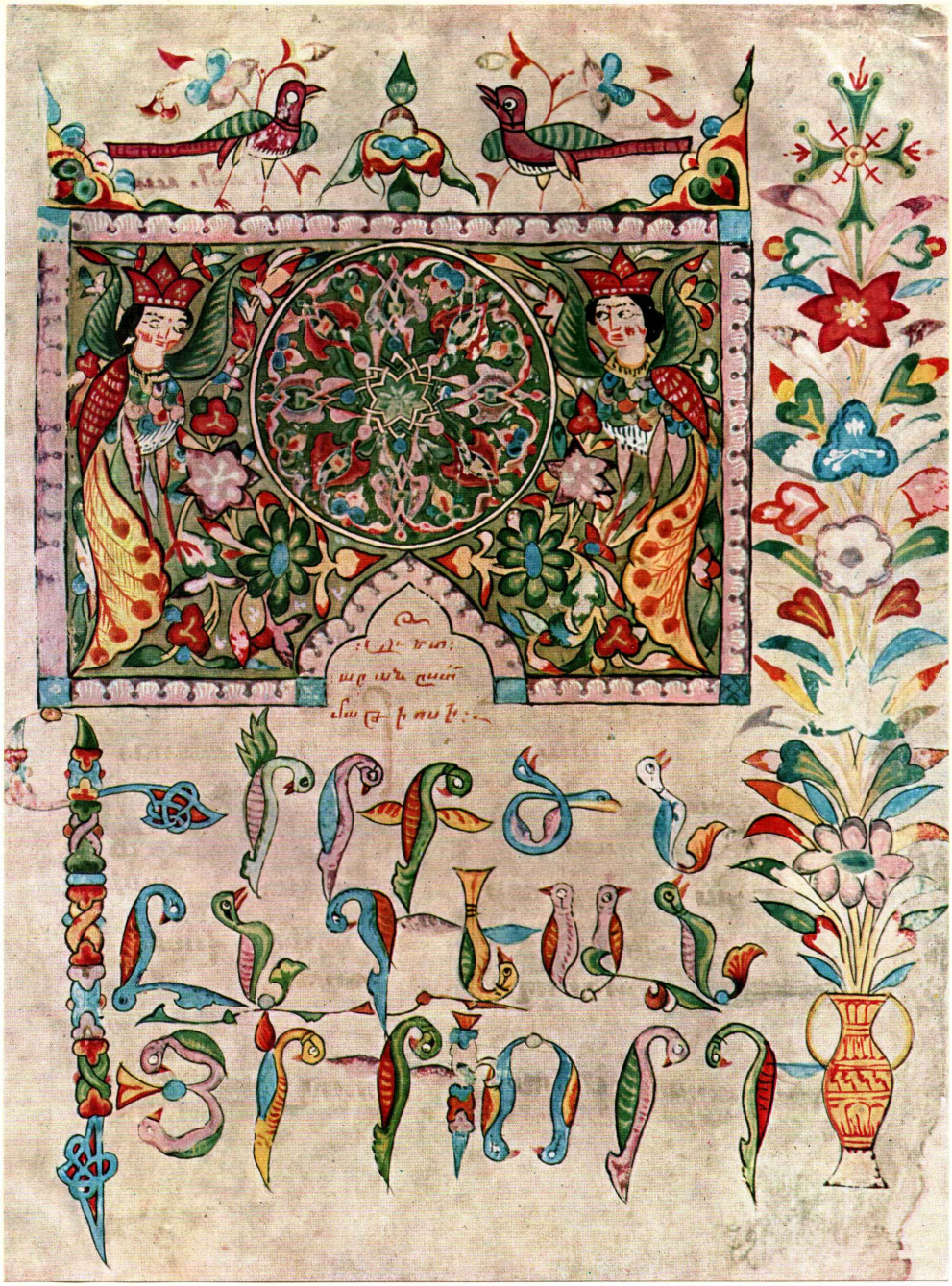
11 3/4 × 8 1/4"

THE GOSPEL OF THE END OF THE FOURTEENTH AND THE BEGINNING OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Executed in the Monastery of Tat'ev

Painted by Grigor

(Matenadaran 6305)



The painters who illustrate historical events usually select battles and other military scenes; the master of the Hymnal of 1482 is no exception. To illustrate the song in honor of Vardan Mamikonian and his companions, all canonized saints, he chooses to represent the Battle of Avaraïr (451 A.D.). In his miniature the Persians use harnessed combat elephants. The battle itself is represented in a rather stereotyped fashion by "forests of lances," "clouds of arrows," severed heads. Only one figure, whom one finds again in other paintings of the same battle, is rather worthy of note. It is that of a short man in profile, helmeted, in a short tunic, who stands in front of Vardan's horse and holds a shield at the end of a long handle. His costume, his position before the enemy, and his defiant attitude enable us to recognize that picturesque person who, in serious or mock battles, insulted the enemy in order to provoke him and make him lose control over the battle action.

Two Scenes of the Battle of Avaraïr

Each scene 3 7/8 × 3 1/8″

HYMNAL OF 1482

(Matenadaran 1620)

Teaching Scene and *Portraits of the Patrons*

Double Page of
a Now Lost Manuscript
1419
(Matenadaran 3714)

This painting is the work of an unknown artist of the same school as Dzerun. His patrons are represented in garments of the period, less stylized than those of Dzerun. The drapery folds are simplified.

Հաստատութիւն նախ
յոհան
հայր էր
էնկնէ

The Evangelist Matthew

8 5/8 × 5 7/8″

THE GOSPEL OF 1610

Executed in New Djulfa, Ispahan

Painted by Jacob Tjughaetsi

(Matenadaran 7639)

In 1592 in the village of Avants, near Van, Jacob Tjughaetsi illustrated a Gospel Book. In 1610 in New Djulfa (a colony of deported Armenians in the suburbs of Ispahan), Jacob Tjughaetsi illustrated a Gospel commissioned by Avetis, wealthy merchant and patron of the arts.

The style of this manuscript and that of the Gospel of 1592 permits us to attribute them to the same artist. Jacob is named Tjughaetsi to indicate that he came from Djulfa and not that he lived in New Djulfa. When did he come there? In all likelihood after 1592 when he returned from Van. He was deported to Persia with the entire population of Djulfa and its environs by order of the Shah Abbas.

Two Canon Tables

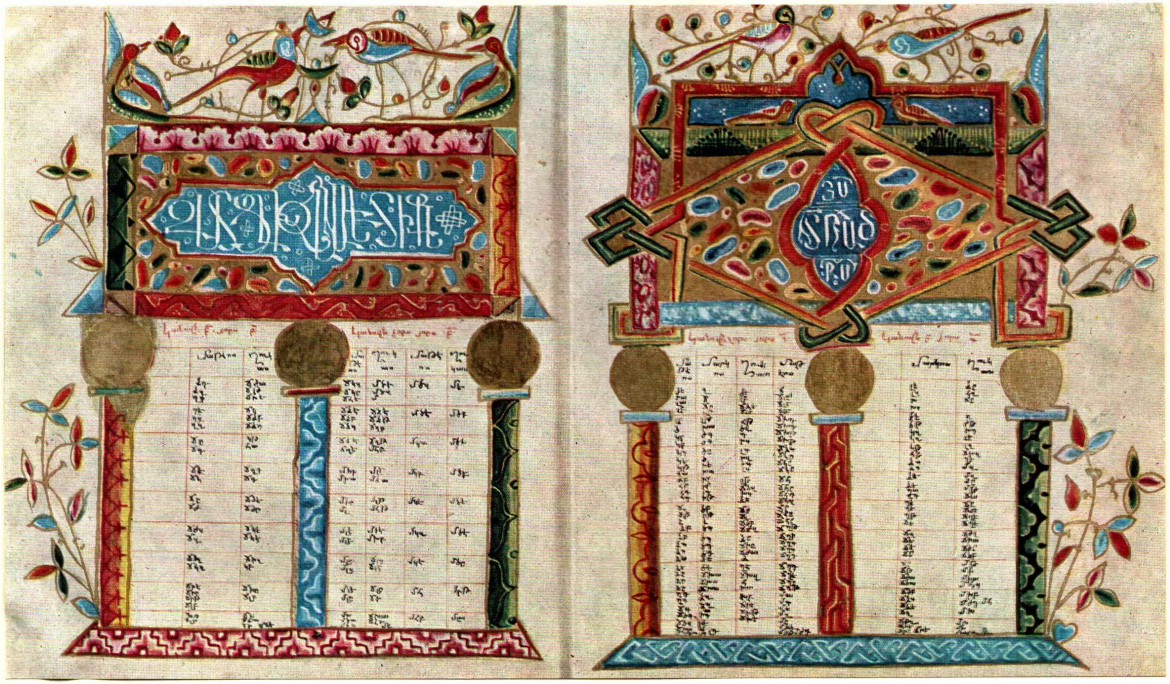
7 1/2 × 12 1/2″

THE GOSPEL OF 1610

Executed in New Djulfa, Ispahan

Painted by Jacob Tjughaetsi

(Matenadaran 7639)



The *Gospel of 1610* has forty-four full-page miniatures, not counting the canon tables, instead of the usual thirteen or fifteen miniatures. The love which the painter puts into his work and his poetic sensibility are expressed in a text accompanying the Gospel. Jacob says of his work that it is a garden full of roses, in bloom like Paradise in the springtime, and earnestly begs the reader not to soil it, not to leaf through it with wet fingers.

Four centuries later the garden has lost nothing of its brightness and charms its observer with its ever-fresh colors.

The Holy Women at the Sepulcher

9 1/2 × 6 5/8″

THE GOSPEL OF 1610

Executed in New Djulfa, Ispahan

Painted by Jacob Tjughaetsi

(Matenadaran 7639)

The colors are extremely important in the backgrounds where they appear as clouds. Moreover, they often emphasize the general tone of the scene. The composition is also refined and meaningful.

The canon tables and title pages are as rich as the narrative miniatures. The ornamental motifs are purely Armenian, with few exceptions. The artist's years in Persia find expression in certain details such as the frames for the columns of text, the calligraphy, etc.

In the representation of the Marriage at Cana the artist, contrary to traditional iconography, places the men in one room, the women in another.

But Jacob lost none of his creative ability during his captivity. And he did not forget his knowledge of Armenian traditions.

The three manuscripts which are known to be by this artist must not be the only ones he executed. Publication of his works will probably result in the discovery of others elsewhere.

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes

7 7/8 × 4 3/4″

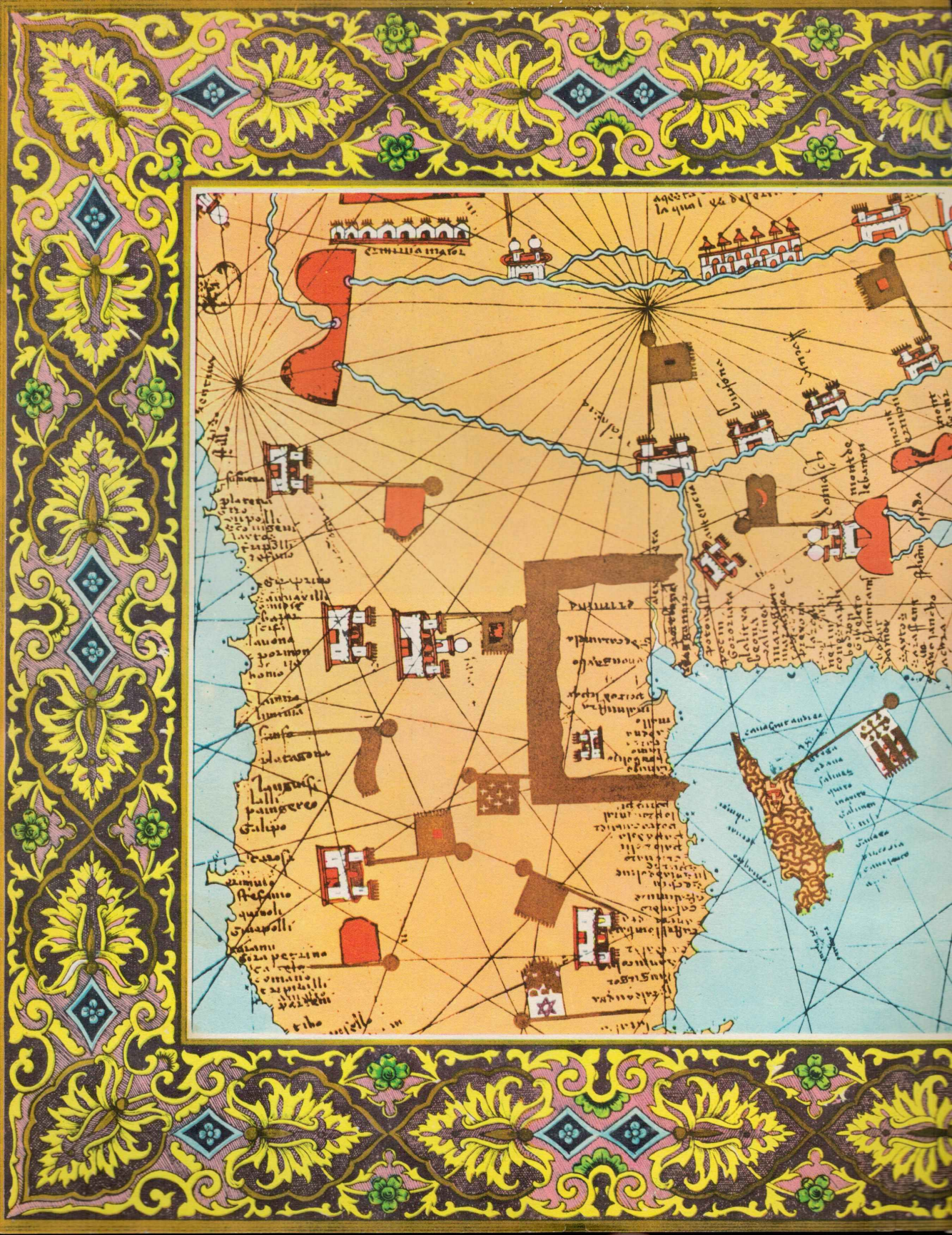
THE GOSPEL OF 1610

Executed in New Djulfa, Ispahan

Painted by Jacob Tjughaetsi

(Matenadaran 7639)

Scene from the Life of Alexander the Great

THE ROMANCE OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT
Executed in Ispahan
Painted by Jacob Tjughaetsi
Beginning of the seventeenth century
(Matenadaran 5472)

This manuscript is the third to bear the signature of Tjughaetsi. The illustrations follow the indications of the text very closely and express all its picturesque qualities. Human types, costumes, and accoutrements are found in many animated scenes, lending a very specific and personal atmosphere to the scenes.